

Workers in a London hospital ignored the anti union laws and won, reports Nick Clark

CLEANERS DEFY THE LAW AND WIN >>Page 3



Migrants and campaigners talk to Alistair Farrow from the Mexican-US border >>Pages 10&11

WELCOME TO AMERICA

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CROYDON STANDS UP TO RACISM
PAGE 7



PART OF the protest against racist attacks last Saturday

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

ANTI-RACISM

James Baldwin
—a Civil Rights leader and writer

JAMES BALDWIN had a unique ability to voice the frustrations of the oppressed. His writings shaped the struggle for Civil Rights and were shaped by it.

His writings explore the individual's search for self-identity, and how that search clashes with a repressive society.

>>Pages 14&15

RAILWAYS



Rail workers bring system to a standstill

IN THE wake of major rail strikes last weekend there's evidence that the government is suppressing another damaging report into Govia Thameslink Railway.

Some pickets suggested more joint action between Aslef and the RMT can push the fight forward.

>>Page 6

SCHOOLS

Schools anti-cuts campaign spreads across England

AROUND 300 people met in South Gloucestershire on Thursday of last week to oppose Tory cuts to school funding.

Another 50 parents, governors and teachers met in Leamington Spa last Wednesday.

Get involved in the fight.

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AFTER TRUMP STRIKES SYRIA SAY NO TO WAR DRIVE

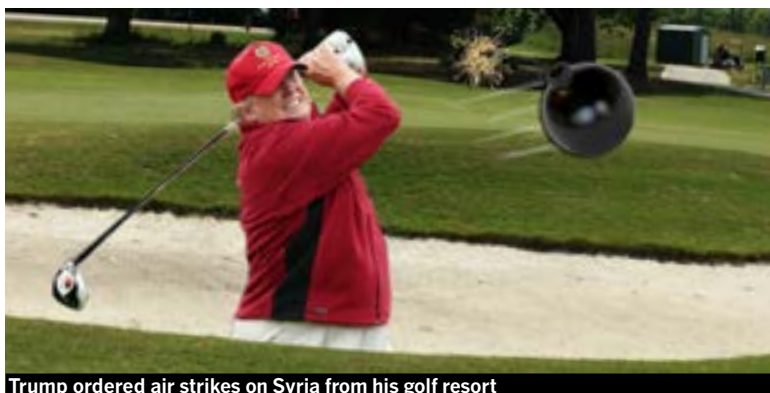
by DAVE SEWELL

DONALD TRUMP is dragging the world towards war—and Theresa May is backing him all the way.

From the safety of his golf club, he ordered a missile strike that killed more of the civilians suffering under Syria's murderous dictatorship.

Other US warships are on their way to menace North Korea.

Russian president Vladimir



Trump ordered air strikes on Syria from his golf resort

Putin threatened to respond with "force" to any further aggressions.

He cares no more for Syrians' interests than Trump does.

Rival superpowers and their allies are vying for influence.

Such competition once led to the slaughter of the First World War. A conflict on a similar scale today could mean nuclear annihilation.

Trump's missiles will only pour fuel on the fire lit by the US >>>pages 4&5



THE THINGS THEY SAY

'We should stay the hell outta Syria'

US president Donald Trump in 2013

'Tonight, I ordered a targeted military strike on the airfield in Syria'

Donald Trump last week

'Whatever Assad's sins, he is secular'

Nigel Farage is confused by Trump's foreign policy shift

'Croydon Unity Rally less well attended than my own funeral will be. I am off to Croydon'

Right wing columnist Katie Hopkins pinches a Socialist Worker photograph and doesn't go to Croydon

'Anyway, it turns out the jacket they got me to wear was worth £1,080. Yeah, see what you did there, GQ. Very funny'

Columnist Owen Jones responds to criticism of his photo shoot in GQ magazine for an interview with Alastair Campbell



Pre-pack trick lets bosses profit and dump pensions

BOSSES HAVE come up with a new scam to avoid paying pensions.

Pre-pack administrations are a way of selling off company assets before going bankrupt. Companies have used the scheme's controversial insolvency procedure to offload £3.8 billion of pension liabilities.

The Pension Protection Fund (PPF) is a "lifeboat" of last resort for the pension plans of failed companies.

Roughly 148 of the 868 schemes it manages are from "pre-pack" administrations.

A further 20 schemes are currently being processed.

These secretive transactions allow businesses to be sold even as they are declared insolvent.

Some 53,000 workers' pensions are affected.

The Financial Times

newspaper found that two out of three pre-pack schemes entering the PPF involved selling to existing owners or directors.

Companies include the turkey producer Bernard Matthews, the bed company Silentnight and the textile firm Bonas.

If a pension scheme enters the PPF, workers can have their pension payments capped at a significantly lower level than their promised pension.

So when the private equity firm Rutland Partners wanted to sell Bernard Matthews, it faced a £20 million deficit in the company pension fund.

By placing Bernard Matthews into a pre-pack, Rutland sold the assets of the business—the farms, land and buildings—as a going concern for £87.5 million,

while shedding the pension fund.

Ranjit Boparan, the owner of the 2 Sisters Food Group bought the company assets, but none of its liabilities, including the pension scheme.

Rutland received £39 million while two creditors, Wells Fargo Capital Finance and PNC Financial Services, received £46.4 million.

So everybody wins except the recipients of the pensions.

The fund will pay out £1.3 billion of the £3.8 billion that it otherwise would.

● FOR MOST a Radstock dialling code is perfectly fine. But for residents of upmarket £900,000 homes in Bath, it's just not good enough. People who have bought homes in a luxurious development are upset their phone numbers start with 01761—not 01225 which is the code for Bath. Councillor June Player said for some the issue is, "they've spent money, they want people to know they live in Bath".

Bath?

● PEERS ARE upset. The vermin in ermine aren't getting their £300 tax-free attendance allowance for the day of the attack on Westminster.

The House was due to meet at 3pm but never convened formally so no fee is due to those locked in for six hours. Not paying is letting the terrorists win, frankly.

For sale—one second hand torture plane

ANY Troublemaker readers with a spare £23 million can grab a bargain.

The jet pictured is currently for sale in Dallas, Texas.

The Boeing 737 business jet seats up to 16 passengers and includes one queen and two single beds, a lounge bar, and three built-in 42-inch TV screens.

In its former career it was part of the Central Intelligence Agency's extraordinary rendition program, transporting people around the world for torture.

In 2004 it carried the "shackled and hooded" Binyam Mohamed, who was

then held in Guantanamo for five years. A few days later, the jet transported Khaled al-Masri, a Lebanese-born German citizen who was held in an American-run prison in Afghanistan for five months.

Fatima Bouchar and Abdel-Hakim Belhaj were abducted in Thailand and forced onto the aircraft.

Their rendition was organised by British spooks. The CIA rendition plane is available for viewing by appointment.

Tory donors pay for a dinner with May

THERESA MAY has so far wined and dined 49 wealthy Tory donors while prime minister.

The Conservative Party's own figures show May has held a series of private dinners with fat cat donors.

They accounted for more than half the cash given to May during her leadership campaign.

The Leader's Group—described as the "premier" tier of party supporters—is an exclusive club costing £50,000 a year to join. Other

high-profile members include businessman Sir Michael Hintze, one of the world's richest men, who has donated £3,314,310 since 2001.

Property developers are also represented, including Michael Slade, who has given £645,953 in the same period.

Amjad Bseisu, chief exec of oil producer EnQuest, has given £113,986.

Sir Michael and family

Rats leaving the Ukip ship

UKIP'S WOES continue as high-profile members run away from the racist party. Mark Reckless, who was an AM for Ukip in the Welsh Assembly, is the latest to leave.

Last week he left to join the Tory group, saying that the vote to leave the European Union made Ukip redundant.

The defection comes after Ukip's only MP Douglas Carswell left the party.

Former Ukip leader Diane James has now said she may run as a Tory in future elections.

James, who led Ukip for just 18 days, was an MEP for Ukip in the European Parliament before she became an independent.



FAT CAT OF THE WEEK

Charles Horton, chief executive of Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR)

●Southern rail boss's pay rose from £263,000 to £478,000 in the 12 months up to July 2016

●Bonuses brought his annual total to £495,000

●That makes him the highest paid director at GTR, which runs services on the Great Northern and Thameslink routes

●The firm reported a £15.3 million profit last year

Farmers versus SAS over road

VILLAGERS ARE battling the SAS over a road closure.

Special forces and Royal Marines use the Pontrilas Training Area.

The Ministry of Defence wants to shut a three-mile road nearby, fearing it could be used by terrorists. But locals in Ewyas Harold, Herefordshire, say the closure will strand its 883 residents.

Parish council chair Peter Jinman said, "What we do not want is the term national security being bandied around to shut a road on no real basis."

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Cleaners defy union laws and strike to stop pay cut

by NICK CLARK

LOW PAID migrant workers at an east London hospital have beaten back privatising bosses with an unofficial strike—now they're raring to fight for more.

Cleaners at Royal London Hospital staged a walkout on Thursday of last week.

Bosses at private company Serco, who the cleaners have recently been outsourced to, axed their morning tea break and imposed a ten-year pay cut.

In response, more than 100 cleaners walked out after a mass meeting in the hospital canteen.

And they defied bullying bosses to hold another mass meeting last Friday morning.

At this electric meeting cleaners erupted in cheers to news that their action had forced Serco bosses to reinstate the breaks.

Climbdown

Speaking at the meeting just as the news of the bosses' climbdown was announced, one cleaner told the room, "We need our breaks."

"We can't work without breaks. We are killing ourselves for the Trust. We are going to fight to the last".

Now the cleaners, Unite union members, are preparing to ballot for strikes over pay.

Serco have told the cleaners they will only get a 1 percent pay rise every year of the ten-year contract. That's well below inflation—and much less than the outsourcing giant, who were handed £600 million to run the contract, can afford.

Another cleaner told the meeting, "We have to be one—organised as one. If we are one we can do everything."

"We still have to fight to keep the breaks and they have not responded to our pay claim."



CLEANERS FORCED bosses to back down by taking unofficial action

PICTURE: TOM KAY

"We have to strike so that we can get all we want," she added as other cleaners shouted out, "We will".

A Serco "transition director" told Socialist Worker that claims they were cutting cleaners' pay were "misinformation".

Increase

But it is true that cleaners are only getting a maximum 1 percent pay increase every year.

Unite officials also told Socialist Worker that Serco had promised no changes when they were given the contract last year.

Yet almost immediately after taking over, they removed the workers' morning tea breaks. A small matter for bosses—but important

to cleaners so overworked that many have had to take time off with work-related injuries.

Serco also wants to push through shift changes and have plans to cut porters' jobs.

The strong action, organised by cleaners on every floor of the hospital, forced Serco bosses to back down on the breaks.

But Serco has told the cleaners that the breaks depend on staffing levels. It's a veiled threat that means cleaners won't get their breaks if there are fewer of them on shift.

The anger and energy at the cleaners' meetings shows they won't take threats lying down.

And Unite membership among cleaners is rising fast. One cleaner

told Socialist Worker, "We're fighting for our rights."

Politicians from all mainstream parties blame migrant workers for lowering wages.

But it's private multinational Serco that is driving pay down at Royal London—and these mostly migrant, mostly women workers are fighting to stop them.

While many union officials say new anti-union laws make it difficult to strike, these cleaners have shown that it is possible to break them—and win victories.

What's your story?

Email with your ideas
reports@socialistworker.co.uk

Banks lied over rates swindle

TOP BANKERS lied about their lending rates before the 2008 crash—and the plot went right up to the Bank of England.

A secret recording unearthed by the BBC's Panorama programme raises new questions about the Libor lending rate rigging scandal that first came to light in 2012.

The recording reveals senior Barclays manager Mark Dearlove telling fellow

Barclays boss Bob Diamond

Barclays banker Peter Johnson to push the Libor rate down.

Dearlove said, "We've had some very serious pressure from the UK government and the Bank of England."

When asked for confirmation, Dearlove added, "These guys have just turned around and said just do it."

Libor, the London Interbank Offered Rate, is a measure of the interest rates at which banks are willing to lend each other money.

The higher the Libor, the more worried bankers are.

These dodgy dealings set the stage for the financial crisis that the rest of us are still paying for with austerity.

Instead of accepting cuts we should tell the bankers—we want our money back.

SOCIALIST

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Leslie Brent on being a refugee and fighting prejudice

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Rape victims denied benefits

THE TORIES want to deny benefits to some rape victims. Their nasty attack snatches money from vulnerable women and children.

Women who conceive a child as a result of rape can apply for an exemption to a new two-child limit for tax credits.

The Department for Work and Pensions said last week that victims who live with their attacker will not be entitled to the exemption.

And the government wants women to provide "evidence"

of the rape—a declaration from a doctor, social worker or other healthcare professional.

Yet most rapes go unreported largely because women know the system is stacked against them.

The Rape Crisis charity says around 15 percent of rape victims report the crime to the police. The conviction rate for rape is less than 6 percent.

The Tories have made it harder for women to escape abusive relationships.

One in six women's refuges have closed since 2010. Yet their new benefit rule punishes women for suffering abuse.



Welfare minister Damian Green

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Trump's missiles will only pour fuel onto fire lit by US in Syria

by DAVE SEWELL

BACK STORY

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump took advantage of the Syrian regime's latest atrocity last week to launch a major cruise missile attack on the Shayrat airfield.

Trump cynically mourned the “beautiful babies” killed by Bashar al-Assad's dictatorship.

This rings hollow from someone who has repeatedly tried to stop all Syrian refugees coming to the US, preferring to leave them to suffer and die.

Up to 70 people, including 20 children, died and many more were injured after Syrian regime forces bombed the town of Khan Sheikhoun in Idlib.

The victims' symptoms were consistent with nerve gases, such as sarin, that Assad used to kill around 1,200 people in 2013.

In a U-turn from his previous claim that he would not get involved with fighting Assad, Trump ordered the missile assault.

It won't help suffering Syrian people. It will mean more deaths.

Despite initial boasting from the US military that its strike had reduced Assad's ability to deploy chemical weapons, it had little military impact.

The airfield was back in use the following day, as the regime stepped up its bombing of rebel-held areas.

Reportedly

Although barely a third of Trump's 59 Tomahawk missiles hit their targets, his missile strike did succeed in killing several Syrian civilians, reportedly including children.

Faced with aggressive talk from the regime's allies, the US administration rapidly stressed that this was a one-off “warning shot” with no immediate follow-up planned.

But the precedent has been set—and the tense rivalry between imperialist world and regional powers ratcheted up closer to war.

The Russian government

Donald Trump launched a cruise missile attack on Syria last week

● He justified it using the Syrian dictatorship's latest atrocity in the town of Khan Sheikhoun

● The victims symptoms were consistent with types of nerve gas that the regime has used

● Trump's humanitarianism rings hollow

● The US and other imperialist powers are playing out their rivalries in Syria

● Bombing will only make it worse

denounced Trump's “clear act of aggression”.

Russian president Vladimir Putin has actively aided the Syrian regime in slaughtering its people to put down the popular revolution that erupted in 2011.

Clashes

Russia said it would stop exchanging information with US forces in Syria.

If this happens it risks clashes between Russian and Western jets bombing Isis.

Russia has also promised to reinforce the Syrian regime's anti-aircraft defences and has sent its own cruise missile warship to the eastern Mediterranean.

The Syrian and Russian governments' claim that the poison gas came from a rebel stockpile, which their bombs hit, is far-fetched.

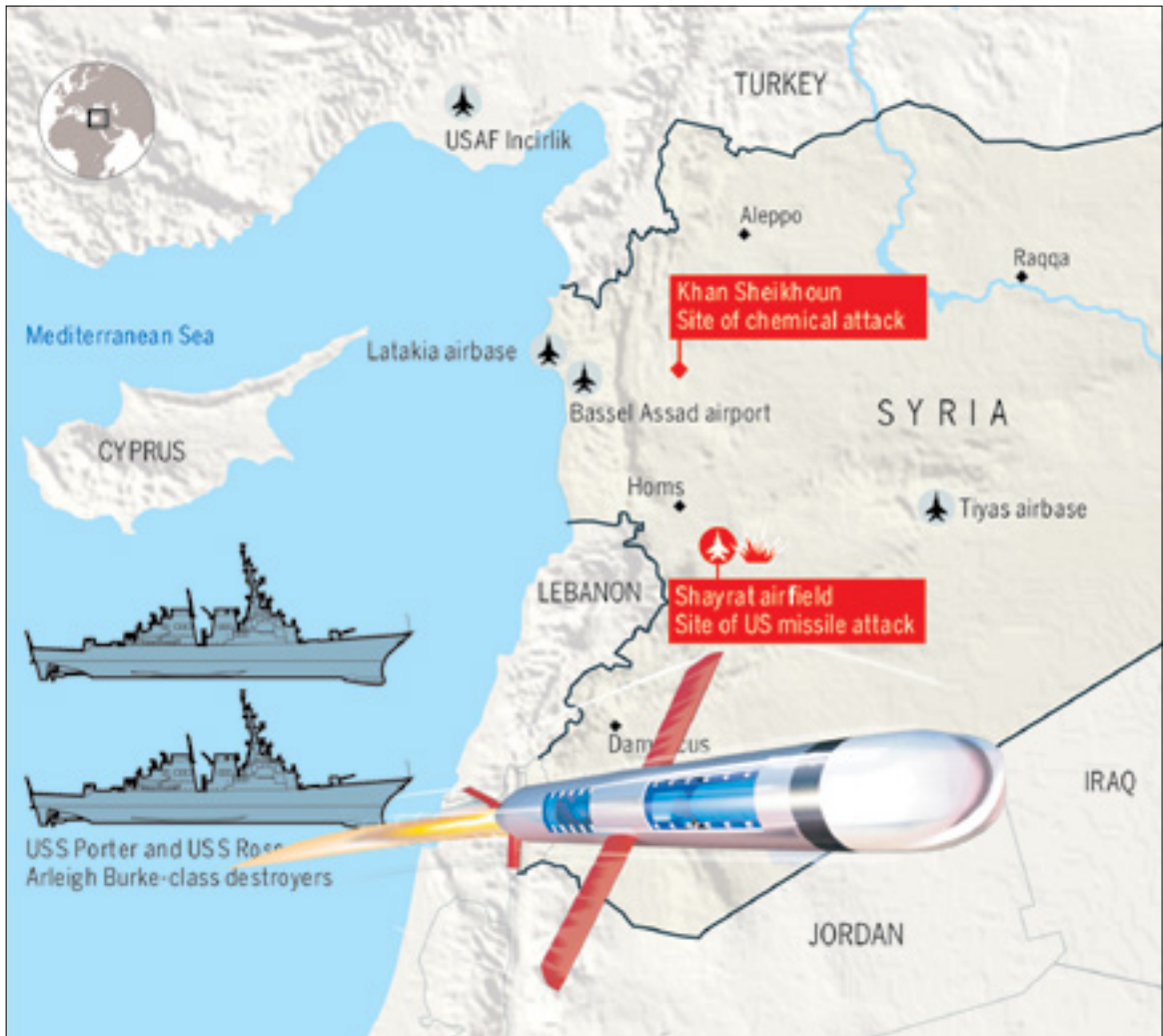
The West's warmongers have no need to invent fake atrocities by a regime that commits so many real ones.

But their crocodile tears are a poor camouflage for the power games that can only pour more fuel on the fire they started in the Middle East.

On other pages...

Why did the US attack Syria?

>>Page 6



THE US fired cruise missile from the USS Porter and USS Ross destroyers

Rulers' hypocrisy on Syrian refugees

DONALD TRUMP'S allies have united behind his airstrikes—and so have many politicians who once opposed him.

Guy Verhofstadt, head of the liberal group in the European parliament, said, “It is the first time I'm not totally opposed to Trump”.

Labour's deputy leader Tom Watson praised Trump's “direct and proportionate response”.

Lib Dem leader Tim Farron said he didn't just support it, but regretted not voting to bomb Assad sooner.

Force

Senior politicians in both main US parties, including Trump's former presidential rival Hillary Clinton, called for further action to “take out” Assad's air force.

Even some on the left have bought into the argument that the West must do something to help Syrians facing the regime's bloodshed.

But Western bombs are never the answer. They have already



slaughtered hundreds of Syrians and Iraqis in the campaign against the sectarian group Isis.

Despite boasts about “surgical strikes”, recent hits have included a mosque, and an apartment block full of displaced families.

Their previous wars in Iraq and Libya were sold as humanitarian interventions. The reality was mass bloodshed and a legacy of chaos that helped create Isis.

Some politicians seek to soften up the opposition to war by holding up what sound like softer options.

Theresa May called for weapons inspections and a long term plan for regime change.

This is the same script that was used about former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

Invasion

Even before the 2003 invasion, sanctions and bombing killed many thousands of Iraqis.

Others call for a misleadingly-named “no-fly zone”. This means a huge bombing operation to wipe out the regime's air power.

The Syrian regime's Russian backing mean that this would take even more intense bombing than no-fly zones imposed on weaker regimes in the past.

One simple thing that can be done in the West to help Syrians would be to lift our rulers' border closure and welcome in Syrian refugees.

But the only solution for Syria lies in a revival of the revolutionary process that swept the Arab world in 2011.

We can help that by keeping our rulers' bloody hands off the region.

EYEWITNESS

‘We demand that all foreign military forces leave Syria’

by MAZEN AL AHMAD
in Damascus, Syria

SYRIA'S bloodthirsty dictatorship has waged a total war against the people and called in its allies Russia, Iran and sectarian militia from Lebanon and Iraq to support it.

This has opened the door for all the regional and imperialist powers to intervene in Syria.

The regime, the US, Turkey and Israel unceasingly bomb and kill Syrian civilians. They all bring death to our people and destruction to our country.

Last week's air strike by the US is nothing but a symptom of this rivalry between imperialists. It is impossible to choose a “lesser evil” among these horrors.

The regime has

used all the arms at its disposal to kill hundreds of thousands of Syrians and force millions into exile.

But the imperialist interventions by both Russia and the US only add to the bloodbath.

We are against the Assad regime and for its fall—but only at the hands of the struggle by our people.

We are against

any foreign military intervention, whoever it is by, and we demand the departure of all foreign military forces and militia.

For all that the Syrian masses are exhausted, they return to the streets whenever the guns go silent. The revolutionary potential of the working masses remains immense.

Mazen is part of the Revolutionary Left Current in Syria

The revolution of 2011 was drowned in blood by the regime and the imperialists

US ratchets up tension with warships off Korean coast

A US naval strike group was diverted towards the Korean peninsula this week.

This armada includes two missile cruisers, a squadron of destroyers and the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson—with its squadron of almost 100 planes and helicopters.

The deployment was officially a response to recent

missile launches by the North Korean dictatorship. But it was also a message to the Chinese government.

Blustered

Donald Trump's administration has blustered against China building new island bases in the disputed South China Sea.

An increased naval

presence in the region backs those words up with weaponry.

While neither side is in a rush for a war, the risk of an incident increases with every new deployment.

Trump aims to increase “defence” spending by both the US and its allies. But the world will not be safe until the war machine is dismantled.

Arms dealers make a killing

ARMS manufacturer Raytheon saw its stock value soar by over a billion dollars after Trump fired its missiles last week.

Arms firms Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman and General Dynamics gained nearly five billion dollars on the stock market between them.

But it's not just Trump's operations that make a killing for

bosses in the West.

The Saudi onslaught on Yemen uses British-made weapons—and the Tories are trying to sell them even more.

Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad's sarin chemical weapons were probably made with supplies sold to him by Britain, as former foreign secretary William Hague admitted in 2014.

Socialist Worker
WHAT WE THINK

WAR THREATS FLOW FROM LOGIC OF IMPERIALISM

THEWORLD has moved closer towards a deadly military catastrophe in the last week. It's an utterly chilling prospect.

After the Syrian dictatorship's latest atrocity last week, US president Donald Trump fired 59 cruise missiles onto an airbase.

The assault hasn't been followed up, but the Trump administration is clear that it wasn't just a one-off shot across the bow.

US ambassador to the United Nations (UN) Nikki Haley reiterated that “regime change in Syria is something that we think is going to happen”.

The Syrian regime's patrons Russia and Iran promised to bolster its military capabilities and “respond to any aggression”.

And tensions aren't only rising in the Middle East.

After the missile strike, Trump dispatched a naval task force—including supercarrier USS Carl Vinson—to the Korean peninsula.

This was a warning signal to China, the US's main rival in the South China Sea and the world.

While Trump is more unpredictable than previous US presidents, he isn't just some

“mad man” on the loose. Just like his predecessor Barack Obama, Trump's aim is to maintain US imperialist influence in the world. His deadly war games flow from the logic of imperialism.

Imperialism is a global system. It's not just about who's the biggest bully on the block at any particular time.

Competition between rival firms is at the heart of capitalism. As capitalism developed, this also took on the form of competition between rival capitalist states—and that rivalry spills over into war.

At the end of the Cold War the US was the world's sole superpower. But it began to face

Those at the top of society would risk millions of lives for the sake of their system

OPEN BRITAIN'S BORDERS

THE Grande-Synthe refugee camp in northern France burned down on Monday night. Some 1,500 people are trapped there by Britain's border controls.

“There is nothing left but a heap of ashes,” said French regional official Michel Lalande.

Authorities blamed a fight between Afghan and Kurdish refugees. Such tensions are inevitable when desperate people are left to rot—and the dense camp was vulnerable to the rapid

spread of fire. The migrants were moved to a gym.

At best, they can hope to be scattered through bleak “reception centres” like the people evicted from Calais last year. At worst, many of them could be deported.

In Calais more refugees are again sleeping rough, braving police violence and risking life and limb. Six Iranians tried to cross the Channel by raft last week.

They were hospitalised with hypothermia.

Sannah is there fleeing the murderous dictatorship in Eritrea.

She told charity Care4Calais last week, “Calais is bad, the police chase me, they beat me.”

“I am so tired, sometimes I feel I cannot go on. My whole body hurts, my heart hurts.”

After demolishing the Calais “jungle” and building a Trump-style wall, the Tories like to pretend the refugee crisis is over.

But the only real solution is to end the deadly blockade and open the border.

Tories line up behind attack

BRITAIN'S forces are already attacking Iraq and Syria as part of a US-led campaign against sectarian Isis.

So unsurprisingly the Tories lined up to defend Trump's attack.

“We cannot allow this suffering in Syria,” said Theresa May in Saudi Arabia—while she was in talks with the Saudi regime

that's blockading Yemen into famine.

Socialists in Britain have a responsibility to oppose their rulers' wars and the alliance with the US.

Stop the War Coalition protesters chanted “Theresa May shame on you” and “no more bombing, no more war” outside Downing Street last Friday night.

Theresa May doing deals with Saudi dictators

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ANALYSIS

ALEX CALLINICOS



What's behind the US attack on Syria?

DONALD TRUMP won the US presidency partly by trashing the reputations of his rival Hillary Clinton and her husband Bill. But the Tomahawk cruise missile attack on a Syrian airbase last week was in classic Bill Clinton style.

During the 1990s, for most of which Bill Clinton was president, the US conducted over 228,000 air raids over Saddam Hussein's Iraq. The US Air Force chief of staff described it as an "air occupation".

In August 1998 Clinton mounted cruise missile attacks on Al Qaida bases in Afghanistan and on an alleged chemical weapons factory in Sudan. These attacks solved nothing. But they were assertions of US global power at a time when there was no challenger to its supremacy.

Now the context is very different. The US has been weakened by the Iraq war and the financial crash, and is dealing with increasingly assertive rivals in the shape of China and Russia. Trump campaigned against the over-extension of US resources abroad and favours improved relations with Russia.

So why this Clintonesque use of force?

One way of reading the decision is as the triumph of the national security establishment. Trump has been at war with the intelligence agencies, which brought down his first national security adviser, general Michael Flynn, by exposing his Russian connections. Flynn was replaced by a much more orthodox military man, HR McMaster. He, along with yet another general, defence secretary James Mattis, seems to be taking charge of US global policy.

So was last Thursday, when the missiles were fired off, a night of the generals? Supporting evidence for this is provided by the earlier removal of alt-right ideologue Stephen Bannon from a senior position on the National Security Council.

The missile attacks were greeted with enthusiasm by the Atlanticist establishment both sides of the Atlantic. Newspapers previously very hostile to Trump carried headlines such as, "A strike in Syria restores our credibility in the world" (New York Times) and, "Donald Trump's welcome show of US leadership" (Financial Times).

Criticised

Certainly Trump did what Hillary Clinton and much of the US national security bureaucracy has advocated for years—he intervened militarily in the Syrian war against Bashar al-Assad's regime. Barack Obama was heavily criticised for limiting US involvement in Syria.

I doubt, however, that Trump has been conquered by the generals. Bannon seems to have fallen victim to palace politics because of conflicts with Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner. Trump took this decision himself—and not just because he was upset about the suffering of the "beautiful babies" from Syria whom he has banned from the US.

The historian Greg Grandin offered a more plausible explanation in The Nation magazine. "The object of Trump's Tomahawks was not Syria's capacity to deploy gas," he wrote. "But domestic liberal opponents who base their resistance to Trump entirely on the premise that he is anti-American because he is too close to Putin, and that he is a traitor to a bipartisan policy of humanitarian military interventionism."

Trump may have also been sending a message to China, whose president Xi Jinping was visiting him when he ordered the attacks. A Chinese academic told the Financial Times, "Before we might have seen him as a paper tiger, but now might deal with him more seriously."

The attacks still leave big questions. Has Trump reversed his administration's earlier policy and decided to bring Assad down? This is much easier said than done. Obama's caution over Syria reflected an understanding of the difficulties as well as the imperative of avoiding another Iraq quagmire.

The biggest difficulty arises from Russia's support for Assad and its presence on the ground. This includes an air defence system that gives Russia control over much of Syria's airspace. While I don't think the generals are running the show, Mattis and McMaster are both on record supporting a tough line towards Russia.

So Trump is now mimicking his despised predecessor, vacillating over Syria and confronting Russia.



STRIKING GUARDS make their voices heard in Liverpool (main) and Wigan (below)

PICTURES: RMT AND FRED FITTON

Tories cover their tracks as rail workers stage walkouts

by RAYMIE KIERNAN

IN THE wake of major rail strikes last weekend, there's evidence that the government is suppressing another damaging report into its favourite rail firm.

The Tories have handed a £1 billion a year contract to Govia Thameslink Railway.

The report criticises the contract and the resulting losses to the public purse due to its particularly woeful Southern service.

Former Virgin Trains executive Chris Gibb got £1,500 a day to write the report that was finished in December.

It joins a report, delayed for months, on the Department for Transport's assessment of Govia's claim that it should be compensated for industrial action it provoked.

Southern train guards struck for the 31st time in a year last Saturday.

Dangerous

They joined a coordinated rail strike of around 2,000 workers on three networks that hit hard against bosses' dangerous cost-cutting.

Guards in the RMT union struck on Merseyrail, Northern and Southern against the extension of driver-only operation (DOO) which guts their role.

At Manchester Piccadilly, Northern train guard Pete told Socialist Worker, "We're

defending our jobs. They want to strip away the safety-critical part of the role so they can cut our pay.

"It's all about them making more profit."

Barely anything moved on Merseyrail as train drivers in the Aslef union refused to cross the picket line. Some drivers on Northern in Manchester and Wigan followed suit.

This kind of solidarity shows how to beat the bosses.

Up to 100 strikers and their supporters were on the steps of Liverpool Lime



Street station. North west RMT official Darren Ireland told Socialist Worker that 80 percent of Northern's services were cancelled.

"There's only a shuttle service for the Grand National out of Liverpool Lime Street and next to no other services on Merseyrail," he added.

Solidarity

In Wigan strikers organised to send a solidarity message to striking transport workers in Ireland.

Strikers in Leeds got a good reception as around 15 pickets handed out postcards to passengers.

In Sheffield the local NUJ union branch brought a solidarity donation to pickets.

Pete in Manchester said, "One passenger came over to us and said if you're stopping people travelling today I'm happy to go away."

Thirteen local councils have already opposed removing guards on Northern rail services. Darren urged Labour members to work to oppose these plans.

Some pickets suggested more cooperation and joint action between Aslef and the RMT. Together rail workers have the power to win.

Thanks to everyone who sent in reports and pictures

Disabled rights demo

OVER 50 people protested at London Bridge station on Wednesday of last week against Southern Railway's attack on accessibility.

Southern has withdrawn "Turn Up and Go"

access for disabled people. Bosses say people must now plan



Tilly on the protest

journeys a day in advance. Protester Tilly said, "You get to a point where it is too much hassle to go out."

Many protesters backed Saturday's strikes on Southern over driver-only operation (DOO).

This removes train guards that many people with disabilities rely on.

Richard said, "I was told there would be someone to help me when I got to Rochford, but it's an unmanned station and the guard had to get me off."

"Removing them removes that safeguard."



Got a story?

Email ideas to reports@socialistworker.co.uk

Marchers accuse Tories of stirring up racist hate

by ALISTAIR FARROW

UP TO 500 anti-racists marched through Croydon, south London, last Saturday, after the horrific attack on young Iranian Kurdish asylum seeker Reker Ahmed.

Local resident Penny Hutton told Socialist Worker, "This is a multicultural area. It's disgusting what happened. Racists need to know that they can't get away with attacks like this."

Guy Brewer from the PCS civil service workers' union blamed the government for the racism behind the attack. "The state is trying to divide us and create a culture of fear," he said. "We need to unite and reject that culture."

Another marcher, Emily, agreed. "The more we do things like this, the better," she said. "The attack was the result of the government and the media constantly pushing hatred and fear."

As the march moved through Croydon High Street stallholders applauded and people stopped their shopping to join the march.

The crowd heard speakers from the local Kurdish community.

"I arrived here in 1980," said Zinar Demini. "We came here because we were fleeing brutal regimes. The British government supports these regimes."

Solidarity

He said that a solidarity fund has raised over £50,000 for Reker. Zinar reported that when he visited Reker in hospital he was very pleased with the solidarity and good wishes.

Patricia Cummings from Croydon trades council slammed the Tories' decision to close the scheme for unaccompanied child refugees adopted in the Dubs amendment to the 2016 Immigration Act.

"The government assured us that 3,000 would be allowed to come," said Patricia. "That's not enough, but they've done a U-turn on that now."

Zinar denounced the Tories' hypocrisy over the refugee crisis. "Theresa May went straight to Turkey after becoming prime minister and offered a new arms deal."

"The government needs to stop instigating the message that refugees are responsible for the situation here. That message has contributed to this attack."

Politicians expressed outrage at the attack that left Reker with life-threatening injuries. But it's clear that anti-racists can't rely on the state and must organise themselves.

Stand Up To Racism joint convenor Weyman Bennett said, "The atmosphere of racism has been whipped up by politicians who want to use racism to blame the most desperate people in the world."



ANTI-RACIST PROTESTERS marched in Croydon after the attack

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

Where the state locks refugees in limbo

by SADIE ROBINSON

CROYDON IS the site of the Home Office's Lunar House, where migrants and refugees must report regularly—and risk being deported.

So it is a key site in the state repression and exclusion that helps fuel racist attacks.

Aziz from Algeria is one of those stuck in limbo.

"I've been in this country for 14 years," he said. "But I've had to come here every month for the last year."

Sachin from India said officials "just leave people hanging".

Lunar House is also where



Lunar House

PICTURE: SOCIALIST WORKER

right wing papers sent their photographers last year to "prove" that young refugees from Calais were lying about their age.

The fascist British National Party (BNP) has held "protests" there too.

The PCS union which represents staff has called counter-protests with other groups.

A PCS spokesman told Socialist Worker, "Staff and asylum seekers naturally feel intimidated by these thugs showing up on the doorstep."

"That's why we will continue to work with anti-racist campaigns so we don't allow them to take over our streets."

DEPORTATION

'I would lose everything—my life is in this country'

by TOMÁŠ TENGELY-EVANS

A TEENAGER from Hackney in east London is facing deportation to Bangladesh.

Abdul Hassan told Socialist Worker, "It's been devastating for me and my family. My friends, life and future are here."

Abdul said deportation would "totally change" his life and that he would "lose everything".

"I can only speak some of



Abdul Hassan

the Sylheti dialect, meaning I couldn't understand anyone from the other regions in Bangladesh," he explained. "How could I get a job?"

Abdul came to Britain with his ill father who later died. His mother, who is in Bangladesh, has schizophrenia, but the Home Office says she can look after him. His appeal will be heard on 8 June.

But Abdul has massive support. More than 18,000 people have signed a petition organised by his friends.

Abdul said, "My friends were really upset when they found out. The petition they organised has made me more hopeful."

More online...

Sign the petition to let Abdul stay at bit.ly/2n8RYp7

FIGURE IT OUT

40,896
people were kicked out of Britain in 2015, the last year for which data is available

5,238
of these were asylum seekers

32,400
were held over their immigration status, not counting those in police stations

SOURCE: MIGRATION OBSERVATORY



Victory for activists in Pakistan as Riaz Ahmed released on bail

Protests in major cities helped get a renowned Marxist intellectual out of prison, but the threat against him remains, **Charlie Kimber** reports

DR RIAZ Ahmed, a human rights defender and renowned Marxist intellectual in Pakistan, has been released from jail after winning bail last week.

Riaz was picked up by security forces at the beginning of this month when he was about to address a press conference.

He intended to call for the release of retired Karachi University professor Dr Zafar Hassan Arif, who has been detained since October 2016.

Demonstrations calling for Riaz's release took place in at least four major cities.

These undoubtedly had an effect on the authorities' decision to grant bail to Riaz.

Boycott

The executive of the Teachers Society at Karachi University, where Riaz is an associate professor, had called a "Black Day" boycott of classes to "protest against the arrest and the false case against Dr Riaz Ahmed".

After his release Riaz said, "I find no words to thank my fellow teachers of Karachi University Teachers Society, teacher friends from various universities, student, comrades, Baloch, Sindhi, Pushtoon nationalists and Punjabi activists and the NGOs.

"You have expressed your desire for my freedom of expression in your hundreds across this country and abroad.

"You have shown that we cannot be silenced.

"We will never agree with the repressive methods of the state and will continue to fight for freedom, for the right to express our desire

BACK STORY

● Dr Riaz Ahmed was arrested at a press conference campaigning for the release of Dr Arif

● These detentions are aimed at silencing dissent in Pakistan

● Dr Riaz Ahmed was released on bail on 6 April and Dr Arif has also been released on bail

● There is now a long legal case to come since the charges against him remain

for freedoms. Viva struggle, viva freedom!"

Further good news came when Dr Arif was also released on bail.

Riaz is still charged with having a weapon without a licence, and other charges are also reportedly under consideration.

In previous cases the state either moves to harsh punishment or strings out proceedings, intimidating those targeted.

Symbolic

Riaz's case is symbolic of a wider issue. Nadir Hassan, writing on the News website says, "Dr Riaz is as likely to carry a gun as the state is to develop care for those it dislikes. But that doesn't matter.

"It is always easy to concoct a justification and then use the true believers and useful idiots on talk shows to make so much noise that we forget the original miscarriage of justice.

"All charges must be dropped now, and the unaccountable state's harassment must cease."

Sign statement supporting Riaz, send your details to freedriaz@gmail.com

Ireland

SOME 15,000 people marched against water charges in Dublin last Saturday

Protests in Gaza after Palestinian Authority slashes workers' wages

by **NICK CLARK**

THOUSANDS OF Palestinian public sector workers have taken to the streets in Gaza in protest against a pay cut.

The Palestinian Authority (PA) slashed the workers' salaries by at least 30 percent last week.

Meanwhile PA employees in the West Bank received their full salary.

A protest of thousands in Gaza City last Saturday saw workers call on prime minister Rami Hamdallah and finance minister Shukri Bishara to resign. "Leave! Leave! Oh Hamdallah! Leave! Leave! Oh Bishara," they chanted.

Some 50,000 public sector workers in Gaza have received irregular, partial, or no salary at all from the PA for ten years.

The PA, which is led by the

Fatah party, governs in the West Bank. It was forced out of Gaza in 2007 after a failed coup against the elected Hamas government.

It has continued paying the wages of some 70,000 workers who refused to work for the Hamas government after the PA ordered them to stop.

Punished

The other 50,000 who continued working have been punished with irregular salaries. But the latest pay cut is reported to affect all PA employees in Gaza.

The PA says the cut is due to a 70 percent reduction in funds it receives in international aid. But it is suffering a financial crisis caused by its cooperation with the Israeli occupation.

An agreement signed between Fatah leaders and Israel in 1993—the Oslo accords—means Israel is

responsible for collecting taxes on behalf of the PA.

But Israel often withholds funding as punishment against Palestinians for resisting Israel's military occupation.

A series of economic reforms have also subordinated Palestine's economy to Israel's. Now the PA is trying to make its own workers pay the price of the occupation.

Some 35,000 teachers in the West Bank struck for a month last year after the PA refused them a pay increase promised in 2013.

They won widespread support among Palestinians becoming fed up with the PA.

The PA clearly hopes to avoid sparking similar resistance by targeting workers in Gaza.

Instead, Fatah has provoked anger among its own members and supporters who stayed loyal by refusing to work for Hamas.

Shut down G20 in Hamburg

ACTIVISTS FROM across Europe are planning to shut down world leaders' G20 summit in the German city of Hamburg in July. Tens of thousands are expected to join a week of protests.

Oliver, is part of the Interventionist Left group in Germany. He told Socialist Worker, "We're facing the old neoliberalism such as chancellor Angela Merkel and the new right such as Trump."

The meeting to plan the

actions brought together activists from the Czech Republic, Britain, France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands.

Three direct actions are planned for 7 July. A "Red Zone" will block off access to the conference centre. Two other groups plan a "harbour action" and a "climate action".

The summit will represent a rotten capitalist society—and the protests will be a reminder that another world is possible.

Lenin's win not enough

THE RIGHT wing in Ecuador is vicious, but the left spent ten years in office attacking its own base.

Left candidate Lenin Moreno won the recent presidential election, but his opponent Guillermo Lasso is contesting the result.

Right winger Lasso is one of the bankers who were behind Ecuador's financial crisis in the late 1990s.

Many people voted for Moreno to keep Lasso out.

But others are desperate for change after former left wing president Rafael Correa attacked workers and indigenous people, and presided over corruption.

Lasso even won the support of a few groups by promising to repeal some of Correa's unpopular laws.

There is a lesson here for the left—if it attacks its own base it will pay the price.

Rafel Sanchis-Palop
East London

To the 'lost generation'

I WAS born in 1992 and we were sold the dream that universities would be open to anyone and jobs readily available. The free market was ready to solve all our problems. Now they talk about a "lost generation".

The government has condemned millions to casualised work and low pay. Unless we fight now, those who have sold our future will deflect blame onto Muslims and immigrants. We need to unite to smash this racist capitalist system.

Jack
Newcastle



ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

Don't frack with Glasgow as SNP funds the gas conmen

THE SCOTTISH National Party (SNP) government was forced into a moratorium on fracking following pressure from below, yet licences are already in place for fracking in working class housing estates in Glasgow.

A moratorium should mean halting fracking, even if on a temporary basis.

But the SNP has been funding test-drilling in the central belt of Scotland.

Their fake moratorium applies to commercial operations—which were not happening anyway—but doesn't apply to exploration, which continues.

The people of the Milton housing scheme in North Glasgow are

discovering fracking might be coming to their doorsteps soon.

Years ago, before the moratorium, Glasgow's planners opposed the granting of such licences in Milton because of the impact on the local community—but they were overruled.

Locals who saw first minister Nicola Sturgeon's moratorium as a timely reprieve now feel conned.

In the forthcoming council elections on 4 May, the SNP is expected to win control of Glasgow.

The ruling Labour group has cut over £300 million from Glasgow's services—cuts passed on to them by the SNP government.

That will concentrate a lot of the arguments taking place around the

independence movement.

Opposition to fracking has become a big issue in the Canal council ward, which Milton is part of.

Neither Labour nor the SNP can be trusted to defend working people from Tory cuts or frackers like Ineos.

I've lived in the ward all my life. I'm standing for election as a Scottish Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate who vows to oppose all cuts—whether they come from the Tories, Labour or the SNP. And I will campaign to build the anti-fracking movement locally and globally.

Angela McCormick
Glasgow

Holidays aren't for the poor, say killjoy judges

I'M DISMAYED at the Supreme Court's decision not to allow parents to take their children out of school for family holidays.

Jon Platt had successfully won two court cases against a fine for taking his child out of school.

The Supreme Court ruled that the words of the law saying children must attend "regularly" meant "in accordance with the attendance rules".

Really? Until 2013 headteachers could grant up to two weeks' term-time

holiday for pupils with good attendance.

Then the government changed that. Now parents will have to pay for expensive holidays or not have one at all.

It is particularly hard for those who have extended families or roots in other countries. If you're going to Bangladesh or Jamaica it's useful to have flexibility.

Holidays are fun and could be educational. Why shouldn't we have them?

Gizem Uysal
East London

Tampon tax funds anti-abortion group

THE 5 percent "luxury item" tax on tampons has been in the news again recently.

The Tory government has refused to scrap the tax that brings in around £12 million a year.

This is an attack on all women, but affects the poorest the worst.

There are reports of young women missing school because they can't afford sanitary items. Other reports say women are having to use newspaper and socks as replacements.

In 2017 women should



not be experiencing period poverty.

Former chancellor George Osborne announced that the money from the tax will go to funding women's charities. But this

includes anti-abortion group Life, which is set to get £250,000.

Women are being taxed for their bodily functions, and the money is going to a group that wants to further limit choice.

Reproductive rights have been under attack for a long time, and this tax is funding it.

As socialists we must call for an end to the Tampon Tax, an end to period poverty, and an end to funding anti-choice groups such as Life.

Bekah Patrick
Colchester

Just a thought...

Strike to save social care

THE TORIES have attacked the social care system through privatisation. Private companies will force through attack after attack on workers' wages and conditions.

They will also cut back the service leading to abuse and neglect.

Strikes are needed to defend decent contracts and prevent the assault on pay and the service.

There has to be a challenge to privatisation.

Ayesha Saleem
Edinburgh

Bad korma for racist landlord

I HOPE the activists who confronted landlord Fergus Wilson took the cellophane off those curries before posting them through his letter box (Socialist Worker, 5 April).

Ginny Stanners
Putland

A big slice of solidarity

I COMPLETELY agree with Martin Empson's letter on coeliac's disease (Socialist Worker, 5 April).

While it's possible to make your own gluten free bread, many people might not have the luxury of time and rely on the gluten free alternatives on prescription.

Being gluten free when you have coeliac disease isn't a choice but a necessity and this policy limits access for those who need it the most.

Katherine Iqdbashian
on Facebook

Tory fail of the month...

THE TORY fail of the month award goes to Michael Howard for his remarks about Gibraltar. For once not even Boris Johnson, who can usually be relied on to say something stupid, comes close.

Of course, if the noble Lord Howard had a greater capacity for thinking things through he may well have urged Theresa May to send off a task force to Madrid.

I'm a bit surprised that Howard didn't bring up the defeat of the Spanish Armada.

Richard Purdie
Bradford



OSMAR Epifanio Gonzalez-Gadba was found dead, hanging in his cell at the Adelanto immigration Detention Facility in California on 22 March. He had been detained while attempting to cross the US-Mexico border.

His tragic death underlines the brutality of border controls that US president Donald Trump is making even tighter and nastier.

Silvia crosses the border every day. She lives in Las Cruces in the US state of New Mexico, but her children go to school in Mexico and her partner lives there.

“He was deported eight years ago,” she told Socialist Worker. “He tried crossing back again in September but they caught him, beat him up and threw him in prison.”

This vicious border enforcement has turned Silvia's life upside down, and she's noticed a change for the worse since Trump's election.

“Normally when I cross I have my baby with me and it's not a problem,” she said. “Recently the guards have started asking me, ‘Do you have something to prove the baby's yours?’

“Why don't you have something?’ I gave him some paperwork but he said it wasn't enough.”

The power that border guards are given over people's lives is a recipe for abuse.

Two teenage sisters from Guatemala, with the help of the

American Civil Liberties Union filed claims last month that a guard had sexually assaulted them.

They say a Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer detained them at the border, took them to a field office in Presidio, Texas, and assaulted them in a side room.

One of them, Clarita, said, “What happened in that closet has caused me so much pain and sadness. I'm telling my story because I don't want anyone else to go through this.

“This is the only way we'll be able to ensure this never happens again.”

One 2015 investigation found that CBP agents were far more likely than those from other state agencies to be involved in sexual harassment and assault cases.

For anyone looking for a chance to harass and humiliate foreigners, the CBP offers a golden opportunity.

It hired 15,000 extra agents between 2006 and 2012.

Humane

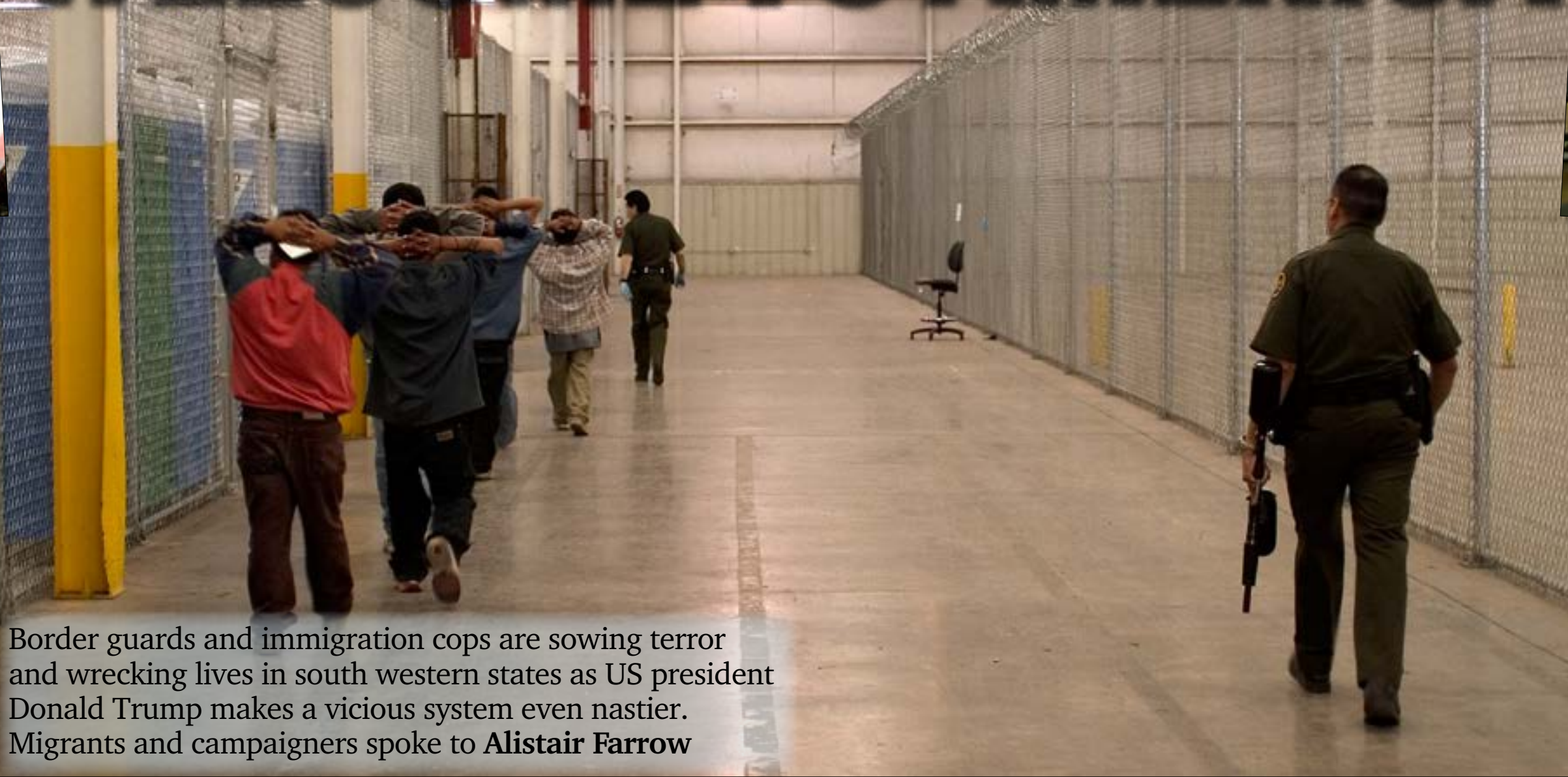
Its former chief of internal affairs James Tomsheck said few were adequate vetted, and argues that this could have led to many other abuses going unrecorded.

No amount of vetting could make border enforcement fair or humane. But Trump wants to draft guards at an even greater rate.

He announced the recruitment of another 15,000 border guards and immigration cops in a much shorter time.

His promised extra funding has yet

WELCOME TO AMERICA



Border guards and immigration cops are sowing terror and wrecking lives in south western states as US president Donald Trump makes a vicious system even nastier. Migrants and campaigners spoke to Alistair Farrow

to kick in. But Alan Dicker from the Detained Migrant Solidarity Committee told Socialist Worker that Trump is already having an effect on border cops.

“The differences seem more related to attitude shifts and directives—they're more comfortable now being more arbitrary and bullish than before,” he said.

No wonder the organisations which represent border guards have backed Trump.

The National Border Patrol Council (NBPC) supported his the presidential election campaign.

And Paul Zukunft, a commandant in the US coastguard, said recently that Trump and his aides “get it”.

Detentions on the south western border have dropped by over 50 percent since Trump took office, according to statistics released last week.

The Trump administration claim that's because people have been scared off.

“Detention centres are at capacity,” Linda Rivas from Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Centre told Socialist Worker. “They are not letting anyone out. If you come to

a border crossing and ask for asylum, you will be detained.”

That's partly down to a new criteria introduced in February this year—the “credible fear” interview. Asylum seekers have to demonstrate they have credible grounds for being fearful for their lives.

“Asylum officers can now deny asylum on this basis and whether or not they think it will hold up in a court of law,” said Linda.

“Immigration judges usually agree with the asylum officer's determinations, and once a judge has agreed people are deported within five days.”

THAT'S AN increasingly common story and even those with “legitimate” asylum claims face huge obstacles. On 5 February this year a young journalist fled Mexico, fearing for his life because of his writing about the Mexican state and the police.

Martin Mendez Pineda received death threats at his home and in the street, and was beaten by police eight times. So he came to the US claiming asylum—and was thrown in prison.

The Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) department did not dispute the legitimacy of his



will effectively make all cops into immigration officers.

Rogue officers and state troopers are already acting outside of the law, calling in ICE agents whenever they suspect people of being undocumented.

State troopers can already erect checkpoints on roads up to 100 miles from borders.

Catch

Now ICE agents are reportedly “piggybacking” on these to catch undocumented migrants.

Sylvia said, “ICE officers are doing raids and going house to house in the area where I live.

“They pretend to be police and knock on people's doors to get them to come out. They hide near to stores and wait for people there as well.”

The mayor of Los Angeles has asked ICE agents to stop calling themselves police because it undermines trust in the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD).

That ICE could make even the notoriously corrupt and racist LAPD fear for its image is a frightening thought.

Racist US attorney general Jeff Sessions announced last week that he supported ICE policy of camping out

US border guards harass, arrest and imprison migrants on the the Mexico-US border (inset)

at courthouses to pounce on undocumented migrants.

In a recent case in El Paso one transgender woman was arrested by ICE agents after attending a court house to get a restraining order against her abuser. When she came out, she was detained by ICE agents.

ICE agents told one Texas judge that they would be carrying out what appear to be punitive raids in Austin because of the city's semi-sanctuary city status.

The city's sheriff had previously declared that ICE agents would not have carte-blanche to pick up immigrants from prisons and courtrooms.

But in February ICE agents carried out traffic stops in Austin's Latino neighbourhoods to catch undocumented migrants.

Alan told Socialist Worker, “There's been a definite doubling down of ICE's denial of parole and lack of transparency.”

That new, increasingly vicious attitude has led to the shocking revelation last week that half of all recorded federal arrests are related to immigration.

People are scrambling to get work permits granted or extended before Trump restricts their right to do so.

But Linda said that's inadvisable because “it puts you on ICE's radar. If they weren't aware of your existence before, they will be now. You effectively expose yourself.”

This typifies the tragic and farcical bind the US immigration system puts immigrants in—following the law could get them thrown in prison.

Obama's immigration system was monstrous. Trump is on the warpath, and his even nastier version is still only beginning to take shape.

It must be opposed.

Some names have been changed to protect people's identity



at courthouses to pounce on undocumented migrants.

In a recent case in El Paso one transgender woman was arrested by ICE agents after attending a court house to get a restraining order against her abuser. When she came out, she was detained by ICE agents.

NEW RULES and a threat of further clampdowns are creating an atmosphere of fear. “People are fearful, understandably,” Linda said.

“There haven't been any reported targeted raids to pick up immigrants in El Paso yet. But there also seems to be a decline in people coming in and asking for refuge.”

“We are going to see a decline in people reporting because they will be too scared,” said Linda. Crimes against individuals will go unreported because of victims' fear of deportation.

Some city administrations have declared themselves “sanctuary cities” that allow residence to undocumented migrants.

There has been a new movement to declare them since Trump's election.

It comes partly from a renewed focus on city administrations by the Democrats after their defeat in the congressional and presidential elections.

That's partly where the new “sanctuary city” movement comes from. The far larger part is the movement from below in churches, workplaces and on the streets.

Some names have been changed to protect people's identity



“Troopers can set up checkpoints 100 miles from borders



WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to www.swp.org.uk or phone 020 7840 5602 for more information

{ SOCIALIST WORKER } BRANCH MEETINGS

Weekly meetings to discuss political issues and our local interventions. All welcome.

BARNSELEY

Is Trump leading the world to world war three?

Thu 20 Apr, 7pm,
YMCA,
Blucher St,
S70 1AP

BIRMINGHAM: CITY CENTRE

Human nature—are we too selfish for socialism?

Wed 19 Apr, 7pm,
Birmingham LGBT Centre,
38/40 Holloway Circus,
B1 1EQ

BOLTON

Marxism and women's liberation—how do we fight sexism today?

Thu 20 Apr, 6.30pm,
Bolton Socialist Club,
16 Wood St (off Bradshawgate),
BL1 1DY

BRADFORD

Why capitalism fails

Thu 20 Apr, 7pm,
Glyde House,
Little Horton Lane
(opposite the ice rink),
BD5 0BQ

BRISTOL

How can working people unite?

Wed 19 Apr, 7.30pm,
YHA, 14 Narrow Quay,
BS1 4QA

BURNLEY AND PENDLE

Crisis in Turkey—is democracy under threat?

Wed 19 Apr, 7.30pm,
Red Triangle Cafe,
160 St James's St,
BB11 1NR

CAMBRIDGE

Why won't the Tories fund the NHS?

Thu 20 Apr, 7.30pm,
River Lane Centre,
River Lane,
CB5 8HP

CARDIFF

Can Labour recover?

Wed 19 Apr, 7.30pm,
Cathays Community Centre,
Cathays Terrace,
CF24 4HX

CHESTERFIELD

The role of the workers' councils (soviets) in the Russian Revolution

Thu 27 Apr, 7.30pm,
Chesterfield Library,
New Beetwell St, S40 1QN

DERBY

Capitalism in crisis—is the long depression over?

Thu 20 Apr, 7pm,
West End Community Centre,
Mackworth Rd (next to Britannia Mill), DE22 3BL

DUNDEE

Fighting oppression today

Wed 19 Apr, 7.30pm,
Dundee Voluntary Action,
10 Constitution Rd,
DD1 1LL

SOCIALIST WORKER BRANCH MEETINGS

Young refugees trapped in northern France earlier this year

The case against borders—why we oppose all immigration controls

BRIGHTON

Thu 20 Apr, 7.30pm,
Friends Meeting House,
Ship St,
BN1 1AF

HUDDERSFIELD

Wed 19 Apr, 6.30pm,
Brian Jackson House,
2 New North Parade (near both train and bus stations),
HD1 5JP

LEICESTER

Wed 26 Apr, 7pm,
Leicester LGBT Centre,
15 Wellington St,
LE1 6HH

PORTSMOUTH

Wed 19 Apr, 7.30pm,
Somerstown
Community Centre,
River's St,
P05 4EZ

EDINBURGH

Zionism, antisemitism and Palestine

Wed 19 Apr, 7.30pm,
Friends Meeting House,
7 Victoria St, EH1 2JL

EXETER

What is democracy?

Thu 20 Apr, 6.30pm,
Exeter Community Centre,
17 St. Davids Hill, EX4 3RG

GLASGOW

1917—Russia's red year

Thu 20 Apr, 7pm,
Avant Garde, 33-44 King St,
Merchant City, G1 5QT

HULL

Why won't the Tories fund the NHS?

Thu 4 May, 7pm,
Cafe licious,
104 Cottingham Rd, HU6 7RZ

LANCASTER

Why we need a revolution to end racism

Thu 20 Apr, 7pm,
Friends Meeting House,
Meeting House Lane,
LA1 1TX

LEEDS: CITY CENTRE

How do we stop climate change?

Thu 20 Apr, 7pm,
The Swarthmore
Education Centre,
2-7 Woodhouse Square,
LS3 1AD

LONDON: BRENT AND HARROW

What's happening in South Africa?

Thu 20 Apr, 7.30pm,
The Pepperpot Centre,
1a Thorpe Close, Ladbrooke
Grove (very close to the
station), W10 5XL

LONDON: EALING

40 years after Grunwick—how Asians transformed the British working class

Thu 20 Apr, 7.30pm,
Y Lounge,
YMCA West London,
25 St Mary's Rd, W5 2RE

LONDON: HACKNEY

Marine Le Pen in France—could a fascist win?

Thu 20 Apr, 7.30pm,
The Round Chapel,
2 Powerscroft Rd (corner
Lower Clapton Rd), E5 0PU

LONDON: HARINGEY

The anti-fascist Battle of Wood Green—the inside story

Wed 19 Apr, 7.30pm,
St John Vianney Church Hall,
386 West Green Rd
N15 3QH

LONDON: ISLINGTON

Human nature—is it a barrier to socialism?

Thu 20 Apr, 7pm,
The Old Fire Station,
84 Mayton St, N7 6QT

LONDON: LEWISHAM

Deliveroo, Uber and the gig economy—is the working class disappearing?

Wed 19 Apr, 7.30pm,
West Greenwich Community
and Arts Centre,
141 Greenwich High Rd (near
Greenwich main line and
DLR station), SE10 8JA

LONDON: NEWHAM

Why won't the union leaders fight?

Wed 19 Apr, 7pm,
Stratford Advice Arcade,
107-109 The Grove (next
to Morrisons car park),
E15 1HP

LONDON: TOWER HAMLETS

Can Corbyn turn the polls around?

Wed 19 Apr, 7pm,
Oxford House, Derbyshire St
(opposite Bethnal Green Rd
Tesco), E2 6HG

LONDON: WALTHAM FOREST

Why we need a revolutionary party

Wed 19 Apr, 7.30pm,
Quaker Meeting House,
1a Jewel Rd (off Hoe St),
E17 4QU

MANCHESTER: CHORLTON

Is a united Ireland possible?

Wed 19 Apr, 7pm,
Chorlton Library (side door),
Manchester Rd, M21 9PN

MANCHESTER: CITY CENTRE

The housing crisis—what do socialists say?

Thu 20 Apr, 7pm,
Friends Meeting House,
6 Mount St, M2 5NS

MEDWAY

Zionism, antisemitism and Palestine

Thu 20 Apr, 7.30pm,
Nucleus Arts Centre
(Conference Room),
272 High St, ME4 4BP

NEWCASTLE

Corbynomics—can it work?

Thu 20 Apr, 7pm,
The Labour Club,
11 Leazes Park Rd, NE1 4PF

NORWICH

Fake news—who controls the media?

Thu 20 Apr, 7.30pm,
Vauxhall Centre, Johnson
Place, NR2 2SA

NOTTINGHAM

Marxism and terrorism

Wed 26 Apr, 7.30pm,
International
Community Centre,
61b Mansfield Rd, NG1 3FN

OXFORD

Marine Le Pen in France—could a fascist win?

Wed 19 Apr, 7.30pm,
Restore, Manzil Way
(off Cowley Rd),
OX4 1YH

PLYMOUTH

Brexit—what do socialists say?

Wed 19 Apr, 7.30pm,
Quaker House,
74 Mutley Plain,
PL4 6LF

SCARBOROUGH

Why won't the Tories fund the NHS?

Wed 19 Apr, 7pm,
Tap and Spile,
94 Falsgrave Rd,
YO12 5AZ

SHEFFIELD: CITY CENTRE

Fake news and alternative facts—media in the 21st century

Thu 20 Apr, 7pm,
Central United
Reformed Church,
60 Norfolk St (near
Crucible Theatre),
S1 2JB

SOUTHAMPTON

The housing crisis—what do socialists say?

Wed 19 Apr, 7.30pm,
Central Baptist Church Hall,
Devonshire Rd,
SO15 2GY

SWANSEA

William Cuffay and the Chartist movement for workers' rights

Thu 20 Apr, 7.30pm,
Brynmill Community Centre,
St Albans Rd,
SA2 0BP

WIGAN

Is the long depression over?

Wed 19 Apr, 7pm,
Little Fifteen pub,
17-19 Wallgate (opposite
Wigan Post Office),
WN1 1LD

WOLVERHAMPTON AND WALSALL

Abortion—why we defend a woman's right to choose

Wed 19 Apr, 7.30pm,
Wild Bytes Cafe,
Darlington St,
WV1 4HW

{ MOVEMENT EVENTS }

BARNSELEY

May Day festival of solidarity

Sat 29-Sun 30 Apr, 1pm-11pm,
The Old School House,
Blackburn Lane,
S75 2BA.
maydaysolidarity.wordpress.com

NATIONAL

Marxism 2017—ideas for a world in turmoil

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Central London.
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NATIONAL

March for homes

Sat 24 June, 11am,
Central London.
Called by Axe the Housing Act. Go to bit.ly/2nSSean

NATIONAL

Stand Up To Racism national conference

Sat 21 Oct,
Central London.
For more information go to standuptoracism.org.uk

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To mark International Workers' Day on 1 May, every year we print solidarity messages from readers, union branches and campaigns

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- £95 gets you three columns
- ask us for larger greetings

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Guerrilla lifts the lid on a hidden history of struggle

New TV drama portrays the Black Power movement in Britain and the state's quest to crush it—and it's well worth watching, writes **Moyra Samuels**

IT IS 1971, London. Black people are facing police brutality, discrimination in jobs and housing, and a vocal fascist presence to "keep Britain white". Additionally, the 1971 Immigration Act will mean that British Commonwealth citizens will lose their right to remain.

This is the backdrop to new TV series *Guerrilla*. Poignantly it screens after the unexpected death of Darcus Howe, who collaborated on the series.

Howe was a spirited and formidable anti-racist and an active member of the British Black Panther movement.

He was also one of the Mangrove Nine, who in 1971 were arrested and put on trial for crimes, including conspiracy to incite a riot. They were eventually acquitted of the charges.

Set in Brixton and Notting Hill Gate at the time, *Guerrilla* explores the response of black people to the experience of racism through the love story of a couple, Jas and Marcus.

Their social network represents the Commonwealth immigrant communities thrown together—Irish, Caribbean, African and Asian.

The brutality of the police and the ease with which they could physically attack these communities is portrayed with shocking accuracy.

A Special Branch unit called the Black Power Desk was tasked to destroy all forms of black activism. Cops working with the unit target Jas and Marcus's friend and beat him to death on a demonstration.

Marcus and Jas decide to take action. This leads them to liberate a political prisoner called Dhari and form an underground cell to take on the Black Power Desk.

"Forget the doctrine of good blacks that is propagated by the white right



BABOU CEESAY as Marcus, Nathaniel Martello-White as Dhari and Freida Pinto as Jas

wing press. Nothing ever came from being good," said Dhari.

Their relationship and the movement's direction are tested as the police scour the community in search of them.

The opening episodes are a reminder that the Black Power movement had strong women in its leadership and was part of an international movement against colonialism.

Some Black Lives Matter activists' criticisms of the casting of Freida Pinto (an Asian woman) as Jas reflect historical ignorance of the makeup of black resistance in Britain. The character references Indian author and activist Mala Sen in London in the 1960s.

Sen and Howe were part of a defence group to protect a community under attack from racists, and they formed the Bengali Housing Action group.

In effect it established Brick Lane as the centre of the Bengali community in east London.

In the words of South African black consciousness leader Steve Biko, "Being black is not a matter of pigmentation—being black is a reflection of a mental attitude."

Guerrilla is a timely series. It lifts the lid on a period of struggle that has been otherwise hidden from history.

Some in the movement chose to

use guerrilla tactics to overthrow the British state while others wanted to develop a mass movement and use direct action to bring about change.

In the 1970s there were 3,000 members of the Black Panthers based in Notting Hill Gate and Brixton.

Guerrilla raises questions about the most effective ways to challenge the institutional racism of the state, while emphasising the right of black people to defend themselves.

I look forward to the series developing and how it depicts the rise of the mass movement to challenge racism. It's certainly a series worth watching!

Guerrilla is on Sky Atlantic Thu 13 April

New play pulls no punches about deaths in custody

THEATRE

CUSTODY

Created by Urbain Hayo and written by Tom Wainwright. Free performance Thu 20 Apr at Poplar Union, 2 Cotall St, London E14 6TL. Tour details facebook.com/custodyplay

CUSTODY IS a powerful piece of theatre, which examines the impact on an ordinary family whose innocent son dies at the hands of the police in a "routine stop and search".

Brian, a young black man, is profiled as being a criminal by racist police

and then suffers an undignified death on the floor of a police cell.

The story is told through a stream of consciousness from its four characters—Brian's mother, brother, sister and fiancée.

The narrative is a surreal mixture of often quite abstract thoughts, poetry and song but it weaves together perfectly the story of a family destroyed by murder and then failed by the system.

While researching the play Hayo, who also stars in it, worked closely with



Karlina Grace-Pasada in Custody

campaigners around real custody deaths.

These include groups such as Inquest and Marcia Rigg, whose brother Sean died in Brixton police station in 2008.

So the play pulls no punches in portraying the reality of seeking justice and closure for a loved one dying at the hands of an incompetent and racist state.

One of the play's main strengths is that it keeps the story and its injustice in the background while focusing primarily on the lives of its central

characters. Their personal conflict and obvious frailties give it a decidedly human feel, which brings extra power to its message and negates the need for any obvious preaching.

However, it does still contain some powerful speeches.

With its slick production, clever set design and flawless performances this production offers a graphic insight into the scandalous record of the treatment of black people by the state.

Guy Smallman

EXHIBITION

THIS IS HULL! ROCK AGAINST RACISM POSTERS EXHIBITION TOUR

Rich Mix, 35-47 Bethnal Green Road, London, E1 6LA.

3-26 May. Free entry.

Also showing in Edinburgh's Summerhall and schools and colleges in Hull. Details at richardleesprints.co.uk

THE ORIGINAL silkscreen posters designed for Hull Rock Against Racism 1979-82 will be on display with a clear message—we beat back the racists then and we can beat them back now!

Richard Lees' designs were adapted from German Expressionist



The Hull RAR logo

woodcuts, Soviet Constructivist film posters and Paris 68 screen prints.

With production runs of around 250, the prints were flyposted all over Hull.

They were often in blocks of four to eight posters per site, creating a powerful anti-racist street art presence in the city.

Continuing that anti-racist tradition Richard is chair of Hull Stand Up To Racism.

The exhibition has been sponsored by East Riding NUT union.

TOP 5 BOOKS

Bestsellers at Bookmarks, the socialist Bookshop

- A Rebel's Guide to Rosa Luxemburg**
Sally Campbell
- 1917—Russia's Red Year**
Tim Sanders and John Newsinger
- Fascism—what it is and how to fight it**
Leon Trotsky
- Testosterone Rex**
Cordelia Fine
- The disappearance of Emile Zola**
Michael Rosen

Phone 020 7637 1848
bookmarksbookshop.co.uk
Why not visit the shop at 1 Bloomsbury Street, London WC1B 3QE

JAMES Baldwin had a unique ability to voice the frustrations of the oppressed. His writings shaped the struggle for Civil Rights and were shaped by it.

Born in 1924, Baldwin grew up in the New York ghetto of Harlem. Far from the segregated southern states and a century after the end of slavery, black people were still penned in by poverty and police violence.

In essays and stories he described how racism distorted people's lives and crushed their self-esteem.

Children learned to hear fear in their parents' voices when they strayed into danger.

Adolescents doomed to lives of unemployment or drudgery turned from school to crime, drugs or the army.

Baldwin had no time for the "innocence" of white liberals who bemoaned this misery as if it had nothing to do with their society.

Their hopes for black people to "integrate" or become "accepted" were not about recognising them as equals.

"The only thing white people have that black people need, or should ever want, is power," he argued in his most famous book *The Fire Next Time*. "And no one holds power forever".

The book's title was a warning, taken from a slave song reimagining god's promise in the Bible after the Great Flood—"No more water, the fire next time."

In other words, if the US didn't solve its "Negro problem" it was headed for disaster—a theme Baldwin revisited frequently.

He escaped the hopelessness of Harlem by heading to Europe. In Paris he met other US exiles as well as European and African intellectuals.

It was the era of decolonisation. Baldwin engaged critically in debates about developing a black or African culture to throw off the legacy of white and European domination.

Interrogate

Being away from the US made him interrogate what it was to be American.

Baldwin went back to the US to join the growing movement against segregation in the South.

In 1957 he conducted interviews in Charlotte, North Carolina, where a handful of black children were braving vicious abuse to go to previously segregated white schools.

He asked a boy what life in such a hostile school was doing to him. Baldwin wrote, "It's hard enough," the boy said later, still in control but with flashing eyes, "to keep quiet and keep walking when they call you nigger."



MARTIN LUTHER King led a Civil Rights march from Selma to Montgomery in 1965 which James Baldwin attended

BALDWIN RESISTING RACISM

As a new film is released about radical writer and activist James Baldwin, Dave Sewell looks at the work and politics of a unique fighter against oppression



James Baldwin

"But if anybody ever spits on me I know I'll have to fight."

Baldwin toured the South in 1963 giving lectures for the Congress of Racial Equality, and joined the March on Washington later that year.

He was part of Martin Luther King's long march from Selma, Alabama, to the state capital Montgomery in 1965.

For the media, Baldwin became a face of the movement to a degree. But his writings were never simply social



Baldwin's views were in stark contrast to those of separatists

commentaries or political manifestos.

They explore the individual's search for self-expression and identity, and how that search clashes with a repressive society. They encompass themes such as love and sex or religion and spirituality.

For example, the Christian belief that the world is the creation of a just god suggested for Baldwin that black people deserve their oppression. It reflects and reinforces a

contempt that racism instills in black people for themselves and each other.

The Nation of Islam inverted this, arguing that god was black and would deliver his people from the "white devils".

Though he rejected its conclusions, Baldwin understood how the Nation won a wide audience by speaking the truth of how it felt to be black in the US.

His second novel, *Giovanni's Room*, was a rare celebration of gay love long before the gay liberation movement.

Baldwin's homosexuality initially brought contempt and suspicion even inside the movement.

Illness

King considered it a mental illness, while leading Black Panther Eldridge Cleaver saw evidence of a "self-hating" black man. But later as the Panthers radicalised, leaders such as Huey Newton would argue for supporting the struggles of all oppressed groups.

Baldwin described the highly sexualised demonisation of black men as "walking phallic symbols".

His writings scrutinised the mindset behind racism. He was uncompromisingly hostile to "white society" yet sympathetic to the white individuals who were trapped in it.

Even white cops were forced to grow a thick skin of contempt and callousness for the people they policed.

White workers had more to gain from overthrowing the racism that was "crucial to the system to keep blacks and whites at a division so both were and are a source of cheap labour."

Baldwin's views were in stark contrast to those of separatists who called for black people to develop a distinct black economy and ultimately a separate black state.

He saw black people as inseparable from US society, and their liberation as inseparable from the transformation of that society as a whole.

This meant the Civil Rights movement was about "nothing less than the liberation of the entire country".

It was of "utmost importance" for white people to recognise black people as human because "white people will not, otherwise, be able to see themselves as they are".

Though Baldwin's insights into the psychology of oppression gave his writing immense power, defeating oppression also requires a deeper analysis of what drives society.

And Baldwin was suspicious of the left, seeing in all "professional revolutionaries" the cynicism of Stalinism. Yet his writings point towards a socialist solution.

Baldwin himself said, "I don't see any other way for it to go."

And, he added, "the price of any real socialism here is the eradication of what we call the race problem."



A SCENE from the film *I Am Not Your Negro*

A picture of US racism and resistance that's so inspiring

by ELIZABETH GRANT-CAMPBELL

WILL BE honest, I didn't know much about James Baldwin before I saw the film *I Am Not Your Negro*. Afterwards I felt I knew a lot about Baldwin, and a lot about many other things too.

I went because I'm a black woman living in east London who has just got involved in a number of anti-racist campaigns.

There are lots of us discovering or rediscovering black history at the moment. If you're one of them, go and see this film now.

Violent

In the 1970s Baldwin was writing a book about the lives—and violent deaths—of three black men.

They were Malcolm X, Martin Luther King and Medgar Evers—the Civil Rights activist murdered by a member of the White Citizens' Council in 1963.

All the voice-over in the film, narrated by Samuel L Jackson, is taken from the work Baldwin was doing for that book—which he unfortunately never completed.

There are also news reports, clips from films, photographs and pictures which add up

to a crash-course history of racism in the US to the present day.

It also shows the resistance to that racism, and the heroes who took part in it.

There's a great section where Baldwin is speaking to Cambridge university students in Britain.

You can see him straining to get his message across, and his slight sense of surprise when they give him a standing ovation.

Baldwin was writing over 30 years ago. But as the parts of the film on Black Lives Matter show, not much has changed in terms of the essentials.

Baldwin is so quick-witted and clever in his demolition of racism that it is a joy to watch and listen to his speeches.

But he also makes you angry that black people have to fight so hard.

One criticism is that I heard only one passing reference to the fact that Baldwin was gay. It was an important part of his life, so why is it not explored?

But don't let that put you off for a moment from going to see this film.

"I can't be a pessimist, because I am alive," says Baldwin.

Amen to that.



Anti-integration rally in Little Rock in 1959 (top) that is featured in the film. Medgar Evers, murdered by a racist (below)

READ MORE

- **The Fire Next Time** by James Baldwin £11.99
- **Giovanni's Room** by James Baldwin £4.99
- **Say It Loud—Marxism and the fight against racism** edited by Brian Richardson £9.99

Available at Bookmarks, the socialist bookshop. Phone 020 7637 1848 or go to bookmarksbookshop.co.uk



Only taking the revolution beyond Russia could save it

The internationalism of the Bolsheviks challenged the ideology of the war and posed a threat to the world's capitalists

THE RUSSIAN Revolution of 1917 was steeped in the belief that it was one part of a global working class movement.

The leaflets, speeches and resolutions produced by workers' committees and revolutionary groups in 1917 make this obvious.

Some include Karl Marx's ringing phrase, "Workers of all countries, unite!" and there are repeated calls for international revolution.

This was a direct confrontation with nationalism and the ideology of the First World War, which had pitched workers against one another.

As a leaflet issued on the eve of the February Revolution by the Petrograd Bolsheviks put it, "We are against the chauvinist criminal greed of each nation's capitalists, who divide up the world. We are for the international solidarity of workers."

The more "moderate" socialist forces spouted phrases about international cooperation, yet did not end the war.

They therefore placed themselves in the camp of the exploiters who were content to see workers slaughter their class brothers and sisters.

Thoroughgoing

Only the Bolsheviks and their co-thinkers, because they were thoroughgoing revolutionaries, were prepared to end the war at any cost.

It took the October Revolution to make words about internationalism into reality and halt the conflict in the East.

And it took a revolution in Germany to end the war on the Western front in 1918.

Immediately after the revolution the Bolsheviks published secret treaties drawn up by Russia, Britain,



FIGHTING IN Berlin in 1918—a revolution in Germany was key for the Russian Revolution to survive

1917 TIMELINE

31 March (13 April in today's calendar)

- Socialist Georgi Plekhanov arrives in Petrograd after nearly 40 years in exile
- He is a different man from when he left
- He now supports the war for territory and the advance of capitalism in Russia

France and their allies. These aimed to carve up the world after the defeat of Germany and Austria-Hungary.

The revolutionary Leon Trotsky wrote, "The government of workers and peasants abolished secret diplomacy with its intrigues, ciphers, and lies."

"We have nothing to hide."

This global appeal terrified the ruling classes of the world in a way that no previous movement had done.

The Russian Revolution threatened to be a prelude to the dispossession of the capitalist class everywhere.

Internationalism was also linked to an understanding of who the allies of the working



We are against the chauvinist criminal greed of each nation's capitalists

class were once they had made the revolution.

Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin argued there were two indispensable sources of support.

The first was "the broad mass of the semi-proletarian and partly also of the small-peasant population, who number scores of millions and constitute the overwhelming majority of the population of Russia".

Proletariat

The second was "the working classes of all the belligerent countries and of all countries in general". The revolutionary working class had to win the peasantry to its project of societal transformation.

But it also had to rest on solidarity—and ultimately revolutions—in more advanced countries.

Russia on its own was too weak to achieve socialism.

Even the most advanced country could not attain socialism if it was beset by capitalist enemies and surrounded by hostile economic forces. This was ten times truer of Russia.

All the Bolsheviks agreed with Lenin that, "The absolute truth is that without a revolution in Germany we shall perish."

The rise of Joseph Stalin replaced such ideas with the opposite doctrine of "socialism in one country".

It took the defeat of the Russian Revolution to achieve that.

Read more of our series of weekly articles on the Russian Revolution at tinyurl.com/sw1917

Duggan's killer advised Grainger cops

by ELEANOR CLAXTON-MAYER

FIVE DAYS after shooting Anthony Grainger, Greater Manchester Police officers met the killers of Mark Duggan and Azelle Rodney, an inquiry heard last week.

Anthony was shot while sitting in a car on 3 March 2012.

Authorised Firearms Officers (AFOs) didn't make witness statements until six days later.

They were all in the same room with information displayed on a flipchart.

Duggan

Before that the AFOs met with the Police Firearms Officers' Association (PFOA) and V53—the officer who shot Mark Duggan in Tottenham, north London, in 2011.

Several AFOs, including those identified as J4, W9 and Z15, told the inquiry that the meeting was to give advice on welfare.

W9 said they did not make notes because they "didn't see any relevance for it".

The officer who shot and killed Anthony, Q9, was also questioned by the inquiry



ANTHONY GRAINGER, who was killed by Greater Manchester Police on 3 March 2012

last week. Q9 said that after the PFOA meeting they had a separate meeting with V53, which was also "just all about welfare".

Q9 said that they consider V53 a friend and confirmed that they "have had discussions with the shooter in Azelle Rodney and the shooter in Mark Duggan".

Metropolitan Police fired eight rounds into Azelle's car, six of which hit him, in 2005.

In the briefings for AFOs, Anthony and his friends were described as having been "engaged in armed robberies".

Q9 claimed "the intelligence picture painted" indicated Anthony and his friends

had used firearms. However, the other AFOs had told the inquiry that Q9 was the only AFO to come to this interpretation and the only AFO to fire their weapon.

Q9 agreed that they "were not given any current intelligence that the subjects had access to firearms" or "that the subject would be or may

be armed with firearms on this occasion".

Q9 confirmed that they had not seen a weapon, saying that they did not wait to see whether there was anything in Anthony's hands "because that would have put the oncoming team in extreme danger".

W9 told the inquiry

that when challenging David Totton, who was also in the car, they could not see his left hand and were concerned that he might have a gun.

Fire

However, W9 agreed that "you would not fire just because you couldn't see a subject's hand".

The AFO known as Z15 was asked why they fired shotgun rounds to deflate the tyres of the car Anthony was in.

Z15 claimed they thought the driver was "formulating a plan to escape".

However when asked what Anthony was doing to indicate this, Z15 stated that "he wasn't doing anything physically" and that "it is just my opinion".

All the AFOs questioned last week stated that they were not wearing anything that obviously identified them as police.

When asked why the AFOs had met the officer who had killed Mark Duggan, W9 said, "It was a traumatic situation for my colleagues."

The inquiry continues.

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Can Corbyn save Labour from its poll quagmire?

Recent policy announcements could help revitalise the party but Corbyn should be bolder, says Nick Clark

THE LABOUR Party's left wing leadership has taken steps towards regaining Labour's lost support with two policies aimed at benefiting workers and poor people.

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn announced on Monday that a Labour government would raise the minimum wage to at least £10 an hour. He said the rise would see almost six million workers get a pay increase.

It followed another announcement last week, when Corbyn pledged to introduce free school meals for all primary school children.

It comes ahead of council elections on 4 May and after months of disastrous polls for Labour, with most putting Labour at around 25 percent. The Tories are almost 20 percentage points ahead.

Pollster Robert Hayward said last week that Labour could lose some 125 councillors at the local elections. He said the Tories and Liberal Democrats could gain around 100 councillors each.

Tory peer Hayward said his claims showed Labour was "not appealing to its old core of working class voters across the Midlands and the north, and Scotland".

Blame

He echoed right wing Labour MPs who have said that Labour must move rightwards to regain support among working class people.

But the Labour right is to blame for Labour's collapse.

Labour is expected to be almost wiped out in the elections in Scotland, and could even come third behind the Tories.

Working class voters in Scotland punished Labour for its rotten record

under former leader Tony Blair and for lining up with the Tories against independence.

But the Labour right in Scotland has fought hard to stop Labour moving left.

It wants to make it impossible for Labour to accept a second independence referendum.

Labour councils such as Glasgow have pushed through austerity, including vicious attacks on council workers.

Labour's share of the vote has also declined in England and Wales.

Defeat

Years of attacks on wages and living standards—which Labour wedded itself to under right wing leaders—and pushing through cuts locally led to the party's defeat in the Copeland by-election earlier this year.

Constant sniping and attacks on Corbyn from the right have stopped him from turning Labour's decline around. Instead he has made crucial concessions in a bid to keep the right on side.

Yet promising free school meals and a £10 an hour minimum wage can work well for Corbyn.

More left wing policies such as these could help to revitalise Labour.

And Corbyn could be much bolder.

Policies such as defending migrants, backing Scottish independence, renationalising the railways and building council houses would help Labour connect to working class people who have suffered from right wing attacks on all of these.

But crucially the left and the trade unions also have to focus on building the kind of struggle that can make such an alternative to the right seem possible.



Many voters dumped Labour in Scotland some time ago

LABOUR'S LEFT wing leader Jeremy Corbyn

Ken Livingstone, the Labour Party and the fight against antisemitism

by CHARLIE KIMBER

EVERYONE SHOULD stand against the attempt to force the Labour Party to expel Ken Livingstone.

Labour's disciplinary panel on Tuesday of last week found Livingstone guilty of bringing the party into disrepute. This followed remarks he had made about Zionism and Hitler's policies in the early 1930s.

The panel has barred him from holding office within the party or attending meetings for a further year.

It reached no conclusion on his claims about Zionism but agreed he had caused widespread offence.

That was not nearly enough for many Labour figures.

Deputy leader Tom Watson said the decision to allow Livingstone to return to the party was "incomprehensible". London mayor Sadiq Khan said it was "deeply disappointing".

Over 100 Labour MPs signed an open letter calling on the party to expel Livingstone, who it accused of

"antisemitism and Holocaust revisionism".

It is a disgrace that such an important topic is being used for political gain.

Livingstone has a strong anti-racist record. He used his position as Mayor of London to support anti-racist causes at a time when they were officially far less widely accepted than they are now.

He has continued to back initiatives against racism, Islamophobia and antisemitism.

Discredit

This does not mean that everything Livingstone has done is right or helpful. Livingstone wanted to discredit Zionism and the Israeli state.

But the way he has gone about it has made life easier for the supporters of Israel.

This issue is being used for two main purposes—to push back against solidarity with Palestine and to carry on the battle against Jeremy Corbyn.

Israeli leaders fear the growing strength

of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement.

Therefore they seize on every opportunity to say that attacks on Zionism and Israel are always antisemitic.

Such lies have to be confronted. It is not antisemitic to argue that Israel was created as an agent of imperialism in the Middle East and continues to play this murderous role.

Support for Israel is a rallying issue for the Labour right. They are particularly keen now to use the issue of alleged antisemitism against Corbyn.

That is why he is making a gross mistake by not standing up to the storm. Such compromise with his enemies, has happened far too often. It will not satisfy his critics, it will embolden them.

Over this issue it will ensure that anti-Zionists come under even greater pressure. And the calls for Corbyn to go will grow stronger. The Labour right and the Zionists have to be pushed back.



Not a racist—Ken Livingstone

More online...
The left and antisemitism
socialistworker.co.uk/art/42618/1

IN BRIEF

Strike threat brings Night Tube victory

TUBE DRIVERS' unions RMT and Aslef are claiming victory after London Underground bosses backed down from a "senseless and damaging policy".

Workers' were set to walk out last weekend against a block that stopped Night Tube drivers from moving into vacant full-time posts for a period of at least 18 months.

But the strike was called off after bosses backed down.

The workers were angry that all other staff, including part time Night Tube station staff, were eligible to apply but not them.

New proposals mean that bosses will fill full-time vacancies from waiting lists in line with agreements. And Night Tube drivers won't be "jumped" by new recruits.

Tens of thousands to ballot for action

THOUSANDS OF Unison union members working in Scottish councils have voted by 78 percent in a consultation to reject a pay offer from council bosses.

Workers are demanding a £1,000 uplift for all workers to start to address years of wage cuts.

But bosses have offered just £350 for those earning under £35,000 and 1 percent for everyone else.

The union is now set to ballot 70,000 workers for strikes.

Bosses want scabs for cinema walkout

WORKERS AT six sites of the Picturehouse cinema chain were set to strike this Saturday.

Members of the Bectu arm of the Prospect union will walk out in Brixton, Central London, Hackney, Brighton, Crouch End and East Dulwich.

Management is running a scabbing operation and has recruited extra staff specifically for the purpose.

Supporters at the Hackney site have called a solidarity protest at 5pm outside the cinema to dissuade potential customers from breaking the strike.

Union rejects uni bosses' pay offer

THE GMB union has rejected a miserly pay offer by university bosses—and given them until 27 April to come back with a new offer.

The GMB is part of pay negotiations alongside the UCU, Unison, EIS and Unite unions. Its members include IT, admin and clerical workers, cleaners, drivers and security guards.

Bosses offered a pay deal that was well below inflation.

If bosses don't cough up more money GMB should ballot for strikes—and other unions should join them.

INTERNATIONAL ROMA DAY



ROMA PEOPLE marched in Glasgow for International Roma Day last Saturday

PICTURE: DUNCAN BROWN

ANTI-FASCISM

Anti-fascists are all smiles in Birmingham

by BRIAN O'SULLIVAN

THE ENGLISH Defence League (EDL) failed in its attempt to incite Islamophobia and hatred of Muslims last Saturday.

Around 80 Nazis turned up to the EDL's national mobilisation in Birmingham.

They left the city drunk, miserable and humiliated—not the victory parade they had hoped for.

Up to 350 people attended a counter-protest in Birmingham's Victoria Square organised by Unite Against Fascism (UAF).

Bob from UAF said, "No one wanted these fascists in the city. It was good to see the city

reject their poisonous bile and scapegoating of Muslims."

The counter-protest involved delegations from trade unions including the NUT, Unison, UCU and PCS.

Speakers also included local campaigners such as Sikhs Against the EDL.

Demonstrators were entertained by performances from musicians and poets under the banner of Love Music Hate Racism.

Many people were furious at the cops. Saira and Saleha were on the counter-protest.

"We wanted to take our placards round to where the EDL were," they told Socialist Worker.

"The police said we couldn't

as it would provoke the EDL. So we put our placards down and went round.

"We shouted, 'No to racism, no to Islamophobia'. EDL men fully surrounded us—some were all in black with masks on.

"The police didn't stop the EDL, who touched us and verbally abused us.

"The police said we had provoked the EDL. How is saying, 'No to racism' provocative?"

"The EDL had placards saying, 'Sharia law oppresses women' but they were attacking us women.

"This shouldn't happen to us in our own city."

Thanks to Bridget Parsons

SOCIAL WORK ACTION NETWORK

Activists meet for their conference on resistance

by SHARON CAMPION

OVER 200 social workers, academics, trade unionists, social work students and service users attended the Social Work Action Network (Swan) conference last weekend.

It was held over two days at Teesside University in Middlesbrough around the themes of the fight against racism, welfare reform and anti-privatisation.

Workshops looked at working with refugees and migrants, and how to deal with massive cuts to the

welfare state.

Speakers emphasised the need for unity in resistance.

Discussions stressed the need to move away from blaming individuals for their difficulties.

The focus should be on how society, or a lack of housing or decent paying jobs can have more of an impact on wellbeing than anything else.

It was agreed to put together an anti-privatisation pamphlet to be used in colleges, workplaces and trade unions as a tool for education and agitation.

HOUSING

Association landlords get more power over tenants

HOUSING associations were deregulated by the Tories on Thursday of last week.

The change means that housing association tenants have dramatically less protection against being turfed out of their homes.

The Tories' hated Housing and Planning Act has begun to come into effect—and housing association deregulation is a part of it.

The act was delayed partly because of pressure from the Axe the Housing Act campaign.

Hated

Parts of the act, such as the pay to stay, will not come into effect.

But the sections of it that have survived will still be devastating if they are not resisted and defeated.

Deregulation means the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) will no longer have to approve important changes to housing associations.

For instance, housing associations won't have to get approval for mergers, nor for selling homes

whether or not they have tenants living in them.

Associations also won't have to ask for HCA approval before borrowing against the value of their housing stock.

All of these changes represent a massive attack on tenants' and residents' rights.

Fight

But tenants and residents are organising against them. A group of tenants and residents formed a new campaign group to fight against the changes at a meeting on Wednesday of last week.

The new group, the Housing Association Residents Action (HARA) have called a protest outside the Affordable Home Ownership Conference.

It takes place on 8 June outside the Radisson Blu Portman Hotel, 22 Portman Square, London W1H 7BG.

●Housing campaigns have called a National March for Homes on 24 June. Go to axethehousingact.org.uk for more information

HARINGEY

Councillors caught lying about demolition plans

HARINGEY LABOUR council has been exposed over redevelopment plans that will mean the demolition of seven estates in the north London borough.

Council leaders have claimed that there will be no loss of social housing after the redevelopment. But a Freedom of Information (FOI) request filed by campaigners shows that this is untrue.

The FOI made the Strategic Spatial Masterplan for the Broadwater Farm estate in Tottenham publicly available.

But the council only released one hard copy after the request. No digital copies

were made available.

The Masterplan, drawn up by architectural firm Arup, lists three scenarios for the demolition of the Broadwater Farm estate.

In each of these options over 400 socially-rented homes would be lost, and over 500 if housing association and temporary housing is taken into account.

The council has consistently failed to provide accurate information about the redevelopment.

Tenants and residents are demanding a vote on the redevelopment proposals for the entire borough.

LIBRARIES

Tory council takes leaf out of Labour council's book

LIBRARY WORKERS in Bromley, south London, ended an eight-day walkout last Saturday over the privatisation of 14 libraries in the Tory-run borough.

Around 60 Unite union members struck.

The union said its campaign "has seen construction firm Carillion and a scheme run by volunteers withdraw from the

bidding process, leaving only one private bidder with its hat in the ring.

"Unite understands that is Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL)."

GLL is the same firm mired in the scandal at neighbouring south London Lambeth council.

There, Labour is the one handing control of public libraries to a private outfit.

UNITE GENERAL SECRETARY ELECTION

Unite union needs fighting leadership

by DAVE SEWELL

AS UNITE union members vote in a leadership election dominated by debate about the Labour Party, the Tories are using the military to break strikes.

It has ordered Royal Navy personnel to scab on the strike by civilian staff at the Faslane and Coulport naval bases in Scotland.

Unite members employed by Babcock Marine are taking a staggered series of strikes alongside an overtime and on-call ban to defend their right to organise.

They accuse Babcock of victimising reps, withdrawing facilities to union meetings and failing to consult the union.

Organising

Ian Allinson, the rank-and-file candidate for general secretary, told Socialist Worker, "This is an attack on trade unions and we mustn't let it stand."

"We can build a general campaign against the government. We have lots of members in Babcock and the Ministry of Defence who can put them under pressure—why aren't we doing that?"

Unite have also slammed oil baron Jim Ratcliffe's attempt to tear up agreements at the Grangemouth oil refinery, where workers have



IAN ALLINSON, pictured above on a picket line, says incumbent leader Len McCluskey is not fighting hard enough

endured a three-year pay freeze.

The Grangemouth workers have immense potential power. But the union set a dangerous precedent by backing down in the face of Ratcliffe's threat to close the plant in 2013.

Ian said, "The pay freeze is the result of a dreadful deal done in 2013 after Ratcliffe held Unite to ransom."

"We need to make sure we don't fall for his blackmail again. We need to take him on—and look at threatening nationalisation."

Right wing candidate, Unite's West Midlands secretary Gerard Coyne, blamed incumbent Len McCluskey for provoking attacks. The opposite is true—Unite has got too close to bosses.

McCluskey even told BBC Radio Jersey recently that he would oppose measures against tax evasion in case they threatened bank workers' jobs.

Partnership

Allinson said, "The poison of 'partnership' with employers is seeping into every sector."

"Instead of coming up with a plan for workers, Unite is just getting behind the bosses' current business model."

"It's much too passive. Automation and climate change will bring colossal changes. If we're not proactive and independent we won't be able to defend jobs."

McCluskey and Coyne supporters are trying to reduce the election to a proxy war between Labour's left and right.

But Allinson said, "I've found while campaigning that even in workplaces that nominated Coyne the support for him is wafer-thin."

"There are huge opportunities to meet members who are frustrated at Unite's inadequate response to attacks from the government and the employers and want something more robust."

●Go to ian4unite.org

IT WORKERS

Solidarity to Fujitsu strike

IT SERVICES workers were set to strike at Fujitsu across Britain on Thursday in their ongoing fight over job security, pay, pensions and union recognition.

It is the fifth nationwide strike day with three others planned this month. The dispute comes on the back of local strikes in Manchester. The workers are in the Unite union.

Supporters are welcome on picket lines taking place in Blackpool, Basingstoke, Birmingham, Bracknell, Crewe, Edinburgh, London, Manchester, Stevenage, Wakefield and Warrington.

●Details at bit.ly/2oYsHPv

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Social workers want walkouts

THE ONGOING dispute at Children's Social Work Teams in Kirklees resumed with a bang last week.

A full time official from the Union union reported to a members' meeting that no progress had been made in negotiations. Members responded to his recommendation to take industrial action by voting unanimously to strike on 2 and 3 May.

Unison had previously given the impression that it would sanction strikes. But the Kirklees branch received a letter from the regional official on Friday saying action could not proceed without the branch defining what an acceptable offer would be to call off the strike.

CAR WORKERS

BMW workers are ready and set for action

WORKERS at BMW car factories have announced eight strike days against bosses' pension robbery beginning on Wednesday of next week.

Unite union members voted by 93 percent for strikes to stop the closure of their final salary pension scheme.

The dispute involves up to 3,500 workers at four sites, though not all are involved in every strike day.

These are the Mini plants at Cowley in Oxford and Swindon, the Rolls-Royce plant at Goodwood in Sussex and the Hams Hall engine plant in Warwickshire.

Workers protested at the gates of the Swindon plant on Wednesday of last week, following similar protests in Cowley the week before.

The BMW strikes could be the start of large-scale resistance to the onslaught against private sector pension schemes.

Unite should make sure they go ahead—and trade unionists should get down to the picket lines to show support.

STRIKE DETAILS—

- Wed 19 April—Cowley, Hams Hall and Swindon
- Sun 23 April—Cowley and Swindon
- Wed 3 May—Hams Hall
- Fri 5 May—Goodwood
- Tue 16 May—all four sites
- Thu 18 May—all four sites
- Sun 21 May—Cowley and Swindon
- Wed 24 May—Goodwood and Hams Hall

HEALTH SERVICE



RCN nursing students protest last in 2015

PICTURE: JULIE SHERRY

Nurses consider walkouts

THE ROYAL College of Nursing (RCN) said it will consult members on taking industrial action against the Tories' 1 percent pay cap. That's an effective pay cut because of inflation.

The RCN hasn't decided what form the industrial action would take. It said, "Members will be asked about the impact of pay restraint and how the college should respond, including whether members should consider taking industrial action."

Health workers should use the RCN announcement to pressure Unison and the other health unions to ballot their members for action.

Unison's conference is set to take place in Liverpool at the end of this month. The Unison leadership has proposed that each of the union's 12 regions launch a dispute over pay regaining at some hospitals.

This should be a bridge towards national action, not a substitute for it.

NUT UNION

Key debates will shape future of education

EDUCATION FUNDING cuts will be a key debate at the NUT union's conference—but there will be plenty of other important debates too.

Delegates will debate Sats tests on Sunday and there's a fringe meeting on the campaign against Sats on Saturday.

Delegates should vote to back an amendment on Sats. It commits the union to hold an indicative ballot of all members working in primary

schools on their willingness to boycott the tests.

Next Monday conference will debate anti-racism and vote on a motion for affiliation to Stand Up To Racism.

There will also be an important debate on the kind of union we want. We should argue for a union based on building school-based organisation and reps.

There is likely to be a debate on transgender rights on the Monday. Socialist

Worker and its supporters back people's right to self-identify their gender.

A new union, the NEU, will come into existence on 1 September after NUT and ATL union members voted for a merger. There will be discussions throughout conference about how to build a new left in the new union.

Jess Edwards, NUT national executive committee member

FURTHER EDUCATION

Teach the college bosses another lesson

LECTURERS AT Further Education colleges in Scotland have voted by 96 percent for strikes to force colleges to honour a national pay deal agreed a year ago.

The ballot, involving over 4,600 lecturers across Scotland, saw a turnout of 60 percent.

EIS-Fela union members

routed bosses last year. More than 30 days of strikes were planned but the employers buckled after just one.

The union also exerted political pressure. Scottish National Party (SNP) leader Nicola Sturgeon didn't want the dispute getting in the way of the Scottish parliamentary elections.

Stubborn bosses agreed a historic equal pay deal.

No strike dates had been set as Socialist Worker went to press.

But calling further strikes before the Scottish council elections in May could embarrass the SNP and give the bosses another bloody nose.

TRANSPORT

Unions can sink bosses

FERRY WORKERS on the Thames river are planning walkouts on the Woolwich ferry in south east London later this month.

The GMB and Unite union members plan 24-hour strikes on 18 and 21 April.

They are fighting against the alleged sexual harassment of a female worker by a manager and management bullying.

Bosses at private contractor Briggs Marine have also been running down the maintenance and putting health and safety at risk.

Two engineers collapsed after toxic fumes from the engine overwhelmed them.

The workers previously struck twice in January and February and had planned ten further strikes, but they were called off for talks.

Now the action is back on every trade unionist should build solidarity for their fight.

Organise against brutal school cuts

by SADIE ROBINSON

AROUND 300 people met in South Gloucestershire on Thursday of last week to oppose Tory cuts to school funding.

Local parent Rish said the meeting was “amazing”. “We only started organising a few weeks ago,” she told Socialist Worker.

“I put a Facebook page together and it’s been growing every day.”

The cuts will snatch £3 billion a year from schools in England by 2020—if they go ahead.

But there is growing opposition as the cuts politicise more people.

Beginning

Parent Debbie chaired the meeting. “We have had a phenomenal response and this is just the beginning,” she told Socialist Worker. “We can win this.”

The local campaign received 1,500 messages of support in the run-up to the meeting.

At least 40 councillors in



THE Gloucestershire meeting last Thursday (left) and Tory education secretary Justine Greening (above)

PICTURES: NIGEL VARLEY & UK DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT/FILIKR

the area have said they back it. Parents are angry at rising class sizes and the impact of the cuts on special educational needs provision.

Parent Andrea said, “Those people in Whitehall don’t care because their kids don’t go to state school.”

Rish described one parent

whose daughter is suffering anxiety and may have dyslexia—but hasn’t been assessed due to lack of resources. “It’s horrific,” she said. “This is a very young child and it could affect her whole future.”

Fury at the cuts has seen parents organise campaign

groups across England. Around 50 parents, governors and teachers met in Leamington Spa last Wednesday.

John Lockwood told Socialist Worker, “There was a determination to resist.”

“There were calls for a national demonstration and

a planning meeting of those interested in organising a local march to the Tory MP’s office.”

Rish raised the idea of parents taking children out of school to “maybe pop down to see education secretary Justine Greening”.

She also said she would

support teachers’ strikes. “I wasn’t sympathetic to strikes before,” she said. “But then I met the teachers.”

“Would I support teachers if they struck now? I absolutely would.”

The government is under real pressure over the cuts. Even the bosses’ Financial Times newspaper came out against them last week.

Sustained

An editorial said, “A sustained squeeze on school funding seems unlikely to produce the skilled workforce the country will need.”

And several Tory MPs have vowed to vote against the cuts if they remain as they are.

The government is likely to retreat.

But we shouldn’t settle for any compromise that still includes cuts. The Tories won’t back down fully without a fight—let’s give them one.

More online

For more online, go to www.socialistworker.co.uk

Strikes need to be a part of the fight against the Tory attack on education

THE EDUCATION funding cuts are a national attack and require a national response.

The scale of anger against them means there is real potential to build successful strikes in schools that would win wider support.

NUT general secretary Kevin Courtney held a press conference last week, ahead of the union’s annual conference in Cardiff this weekend.

Immediately

He said, “National strikes are a possibility.”

“I don’t think that’s where we are immediately.

“National action is not where our

planning horizon is at the moment.”

Courtney said that the Trade Union Act means that “barriers to national action are higher”.

He added, “But the degree of mobilisation among teachers I think is also higher.

“We would have to do an awful lot of work to pass the 50 percent threshold and the 40 percent yes vote thresholds that apply in education.

“But if these cuts carry on, I think it’s not ruled out that we can beat those thresholds and have that sort of industrial action.”

It’s true that the Trade Union Act is draconian. But unions



NUT general secretary Kevin Courtney

PICTURE: DAVE GILCHRIST

shouldn’t simply accept its limitations—and they should defy it.

Courtney said the union hopes to work with parents, other

unions and campaign groups. “We’re looking at lobbies of parliament and demonstrations,” he said.

He added that NUT members in some

schools are already taking action over cuts.

The parent-led resistance is inspirational. And it would be good to see more demonstrations.

But school workers have power that other groups don’t have.

Strikes in schools would seriously escalate the crisis for the Tories—more so if they were national.

This would mean more chance of stopping the cuts.

Paul McGarr is a teacher and NUT rep in east London. “The union must put itself at the heart of the campaigns—and go beyond local actions,” he told Socialist Worker.

“Ideally we want a

national strike. But if we don’t have that, we shouldn’t have nothing at all. We should fight for as many teachers as possible taking action together.”

Assault

Jess Edwards is on the NUT’s national executive committee. “This is the most serious assault on schools’ funding in a generation,” she told Socialist Worker.

“The money is there. Corporation tax has been repeatedly cut.

“Getting the government to spend that money in schools won’t happen without a fight.

“We will need more than meetings and lobbying to win.”